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CHILDREN OF DESTINY

Sydney Rosenfeld

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Children of Destiny

A Play in Four Acts

BY

SYDNEY ROSENFELD

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SPECIAL NOTE.

To protect the British Copyright, the first public performance of this play was given at the Globe Theatre, London, England, on the Seventeenth of February, 1910.

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a.m.P., May 28, 1929

To that unusual combination—a manager and a friend,
Mr. Henry B. Harris,
this play is gratefully inscribed by
The Author.

Characters. [*In the order in which they appear.*]

Mrs. Richard Hamlin.

Mrs. Winfield-Chase.

Laura—her daughter.

Rose Hamlin.

Maid.

The Count di Varesi.

Fred Garvin.

Walter Hobart.

Edwin Ford.

Julius Langhorn.

Waiter.

SCENES:

Act I. Boudoir of Mrs. Hamlin, Washington, D. C. [One year elapses.]

Act II. Café des Americains, Nice, France.

Act III. "Rosamond's Bower," Monte Carlo. [Night of the same day.]

Act IV. Hobart's apartments at the hotel in Monte Carlo. [The next morning.]

Children of Destiny

ACT I.

SCENE: The boudoir of MRS. HAMLIN, *Washington, D. C.*

DISCOVER; MRS. HAMLIN, MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE, *and her daughter* LAURA.

They are sipping tea.

MRS. HAMLIN.

And how long do you expect to be abroad?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

It rests largely with Laura.

LAURA.

That's a habit mother has fallen into. She always says, "It rests largely with Laura," when Laura has no voice in the matter, at all.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Reprovingly.*] Now, you know your happiness is the first consideration.

LAURA.

That's very dear of you, mother, but my happiness

doesn't require a trip abroad, at all. I should be quite happy to remain at home in Washington.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

We won't go over that ground again. [*To* MRS. HAMLIN.] We are to meet some very pleasant acquaintances at Nice, and we purpose doing the Riviera together.

MRS. HAMLIN.

How delightful! And you sail on Saturday?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Yes.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Then that little romance of Laura's has not—— [*With a questioning glance at* LAURA.]

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Oh, Laura has her own ideas of her career. [*Changing the subject.*] It must be a great comfort to you to feel that your daughter has got beyond the stage of conjecture.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Yes, it is.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

And has the date been set yet, for her marriage?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Some time in the early autumn.

LAURA.

[*With enthusiasm.*] Now there's a man worth losing one's heart to. Fred Garvin has position—distinction—and, in fact—— Oh! Here you are!

[*Enter* ROSE.]

ROSE.

[*Kisses* LAURA *and greets the others.*] I am sorry to have kept you waiting.

LAURA.

We were talking of Fred Garvin—you were just in time.

ROSE.

[*Bashfully.*] Oh!

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Going to her and taking her hand.*] You ought to be a very happy girl.

ROSE.

I am. Almost too happy.

LAURA.

Can one be too happy?

ROSE.

I sometimes think my nature is too intense. I have such floods of delight over little things that I can't be normal.

LAURA.

[*Laughingly.*] You wouldn't call Fred Garvin a little thing?

ROSE.

Hardly. So you can imagine how I can be too happy over the greater ones. I am wondering whether it can be right for any one to be so completely absorbed in another as I am in that dear boy.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Consolingly.*] Don't be alarmed about that symptom. I have heard engaged girls talk before.

MRS. HAMLIN.

But Rose is right, to a certain degree. She is too much of an extremist. There seems to be no middle distance for her. She is always either way up—or way down.

LAURA.

[*Affecting wisdom.*] The neurotic temperament, I believe the doctors call it.

ROSE.

[*With a smile.*] Aren't they clever—these doctors—to have a name for everything.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*To* MRS. HAMLIN.] I hope you won't forget, when the happy day comes, that it was through me you met Fred Garvin.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Indeed I shall not. I do hope you will be back in time for the wedding.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

That will rest largely with——

LAURA.

[*Quickly.*] No, it won't—*I* mean to come home for it.

ROSE.

[*Reminded.*] Why—sure enough—you're going abroad.

LAURA.

On Saturday.

ROSE.

So soon! Then you will miss the Embassy Ball!

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

We've had all the social functions we need this winter.

LAURA.

And besides, we've met the star attraction in private—we don't have to wait over for him.

ROSE.

The "star" attraction?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Laura means the new Italian attaché. One of those handsome, middle-aged, mysterious creatures, who is setting all the managing mammas agog with excitement.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Who is he?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

The Count [*trying to think of his name*] di—di——

LAURA.

[*Supplying it.*] Di Varesi.

[MRS. HAMLIN *gives an involuntary start.*]

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Haven't you met him?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] No.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

That's strange. I mentioned your name to him casually, and he spoke charmingly of you; as though you were old acquaintances. But one can never tell from these foreigners.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Recovering herself.*] The name sounds familiar. A number of years ago—in Rome—I think I did meet a di Varesi. It would be singular if it were the same man.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Lightly.*] It is—no doubt.

LAURA.

[*Affectionately nestling near* ROSE.] I shall miss you dreadfully. There is no one who quite fills your place with me, Rose. You are really the most sympathetic creature I ever met—you just overflow with kindness.

ROSE.

[*Smiling.*] Not always.

LAURA.

Always. Why, everybody loves you, Rose. Even those that I don't care for commend themselves to me for their love of *you*. There is something about you—I don't quite know how to put it—so much deeper, more ardent, than the usual American girl. Why, when I think I shall have to manage without you for one whole year—— [*Puts handkerchief to her eyes.*] Isn't it silly of me!

ROSE.

It's your own sweet nature that finds the goodness in others.

LAURA.

Fudge!

ROSE.

I am just happy, dear, that's all. I have so much happiness that some of it must overflow.

LAURA.

[*With comic severity.*] Well, you can just tell Fred Garvin from me, that if he doesn't make you the best husband that ever drew the breath of life, he'll have me in his hair before he can turn round. [*With a comic afterthought.*] I hope he doesn't wear a toupée.

ROSE.

[*Laughs.*]

LAURA.

And tell him, too—he wants to let up on his work. He's overdoing it. It's all very well to be one of the most prosperous lawyers in the District of Columbia, but he's getting too pale for a fiancé. That's my opinion.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Who has been conversing in an undertone with* MRS. HAMLIN.] Well, Laura, are you regulating the universe, as usual? It's time we were going.

ROSE.

Oh, must you go?

LAURA.

Oh, well, mother has made out a list of her *congés. I* don't see the sense of paying farewell visits to people who wouldn't miss you if they never saw you again.

[*Telephone bell rings in an adjoining room.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

Will you pardon me? [*Goes off to telephone.*]

LAURA.

You'll answer my letters, won't you, dear—I mean to write to you every week.

ROSE.

Surely.

LAURA.

And don't forget what I told you to tell Mr. Fred Garvin.

ROSE.

[*Laughing.*] No, indeed!

[MRS. HAMLIN *returns from telephone.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

Excuse domestic details—but [*to* ROSE] Mr. Garvin sends word he will be here at four o'clock, and you must be sure to be at home.

ROSE.

He's leaving his office early.

LAURA.

That's a step in the right direction. I was telling Rose, Fred was getting pale from overwork.

MRS. HAMLIN.

He says [*with mock gravity*] it's a matter of business.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Laughing.*] We know these matters of business between sweethearts. He wishes to tell his devotion in a different key.

LAURA.

[*With a sigh.*] Well, good bye! [*She kisses* MRS. HAMLIN, *then goes to* ROSE, *and kisses her affectionately.* MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE *makes her adieux to* MRS. HAMLIN *and* ROSE.]

[*Servant ENTERS with a card, and goes to* MRS. HAMLIN.]

[*The visitors, escorted by* ROSE, *leave the room.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Suppresses an exclamation as she reads the name on the card.*] In the parlor?

SERVANT.

Yes.

MRS. HAMLIN.

In a few moments—up here.

SERVANT.

Yes, ma'am. [*EXIT.*]

[MRS. HAMLIN, *quite disturbed, seems irresolute—then looks at herself in the glass, and determines to improve her appearance, for which purpose she withdraws a moment into the adjoining room.*]

[*The* COUNT DI VARESI *is ushered in by the servant. He is a handsome, well-groomed man of fifty. He speaks without any dialect, but with a slightly foreign intonation.*]

COUNT.

Thank you.

[*He looks about the place in a vague sort of way, then finds a photograph of* ROSE *on the mantelpiece, which he holds up and regards with interest, as* ROSE *ENTERS gaily, expecting to find her mother.*]

ROSE.

I beg your pardon.

[*She starts to go into her mother's room. The* COUNT *has bowed to her, mentally comparing her with the photo-*

graph. On the threshold of the room MRS. HAMLIN *joins* ROSE, *and returns with her into the sitting room.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

The Count di Varesi! [*Greeting him.*]

COUNT.

[*With great courtesy.*] Madame!

MRS. HAMLIN.

Permit me to present my daughter, Rose.

COUNT.

[*Takes* ROSE'S *hand, and holds it.*] *Your* daughter? Charmed! [*As he releases her hand.*] Your mother and I are old friends.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Trying to be at ease.*] Yes—and as such we may have many confidences to exchange. Rose—don't forget, four o'clock.

ROSE.

No, mother. [*With a bow, and a look of puzzled interest, she goes out centre.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

And to what am I indebted for the honor of this visit, after so many years? [*They are seated.*]

COUNT.

Your husband is still living?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Yes—if one can call it living. The doctors are constantly prescribing new climates for him. He is now in Arizona.

They give me little hope. At his time of life—ah—you see, one can battle against everything but Time.

COUNT.

Time, the Conqueror. And yet, Time has dealt kindly with you. The same amber light in the hair—the same liquid fire in those wonderful eyes.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Protesting.*] Please——

COUNT.

Nature has been very gracious to reproduce herself in that girl. She, too, has her mother's charm. I noticed this at a glance. Ah, there is some happiness in recalling the past, after all!

MRS. HAMLIN.

And much misery.

COUNT.

More happiness than misery. At least, I mean to insist on the happiness. That is why I have come here.

MRS. HAMLIN.

To insist—do you say? You still cling to that word?

COUNT.

I wish you had not sent Rose away so soon. I should have liked to study her a moment longer at close range. *Your* daughter! The desire is only natural—eh?

MRS. HAMLIN.

My daughter. Yes.

COUNT.

Perhaps—the wish being father to the thought—I should

have caught a glimpse of myself. We are but vain creatures, the best of us—and it would have gladdened my vanity to have caught even one flash of the eye that I should have recognized as mine! Ah—she is beautiful—*our* daughter!

[MRS. HAMLIN *rises suddenly, and flashes an angry look upon him.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With growing intensity.*] What does this mean? It cannot be that, after all these years of silence, you have come to bring home to me the folly of those days in Rome.

COUNT.

[*Calmly.*] Let me remind you that I wish to recall only the happiness of the past.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Then why have you come?

COUNT.

All in good time. Let me indulge myself for one brief moment in the luxury of retrospect. You will credit me with some forbearance, possibly a little heroism—in having kept away from you all these years—when I tell you that even at this moment, the wonderful joy of being the father of that girl is almost overpowering me.

MRS. HAMLIN.

You have not come to reveal yourself to her?

COUNT.

[*After a steady look into her eyes.*] No. [*She gives a sigh of relief.*] Nor have I come to awaken a single regret in your heart for all that has been.

MRS. HAMLIN.

My regrets need no awakening. They have been my vigilant sentinels through the weary, weary years.

COUNT.

Come now, Isabelle—that is morbid. You are a happy mother, a distinguished woman, moving in the sunlight of fine friends. It would be a pity if your nature were not broad enough to hold a little twilight corner in peace—sacred to a hidden memory.

MRS. HAMLIN.

You are still a dreamer.

COUNT.

Yes—I come from a land where we not only dream dreams; we live them.

MRS. HAMLIN.

But this is a practical, work-a-day world, where dreams vanish.

COUNT.

Not so. One page of my life was flooded with gold, and to that page I have ever turned and returned. I have read it over and over again, under the same glittering stars, to the strains of the same music, to all the glory of the night and heaven. I have never forgotten you, and I shall never forget you.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Why do you tell me this now?

COUNT.

It was a mockery of fate that you were married. And

in a loveless union with a man many years older than yourself. Love comes unbidden and takes no heed of circumstance. Maid, wife, or widow, I should have loved you still the same.

MRS. HAMLIN.

But the sin!

COUNT.

I have never called it so. You chose to remain in your husband's house.

MRS. HAMLIN.

It was my duty.

COUNT.

There again we differed. But you did remain, because in his old age you said he needed you. We parted. You said you would forget. I should never hear from you again. Well—you kept your word, but I did hear *of* you—when Rose was born. [*With great elation.*] My daughter! The fever to come and claim her was almost stronger than I could bear! But I did not come! The death of my father brought me into large possessions. But what were riches to me, feeling as I did that they should be shared by another. When the appointment in the embassy came to me, I accepted it eagerly. I determined to carry out a plan I had long formed for the use of my fortune. This very day I have put that plan into execution—and it is mainly to tell you of it that I am here.

MRS. HAMLIN.

I fear this may be another act of folly in your too romantic life.

COUNT.

Listen, and you shall see that there is a practical side

to my romance. [*After a slight pause.*] I wished my fortune to go to your—to our daughter.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Impossible!

COUNT.

It did seem hard to contrive at first. Of course at my death I might bequeath it. But, in the first place, why should I wait? In the next place, it would make talk if a strange Italian nobleman left his fortune to your daughter. Scandal is too easily roused—even if—looking at the thing practically—there might not be a contest of the will. I took legal advice. I consulted the most prominent law firm in Washington. They advised me to avoid complications by giving away my fortune before my death. I have to-day signed a deed of gift making Rose Hamlin the sole beneficiary. She will receive, as a birthday gift, the sum of two million florins.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Rose!

COUNT.

It was all very simple.

MRS. HAMLIN.

But what did the lawyers say? What could they think? What reason did you give for wishing to do this thing?

COUNT.

I was not called upon for reasons. But even if I had been—the lawyer's office and the confessional have one thing in common—the sacredness of confidence.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With vague misgiving.*] No—no—it isn't right.

COUNT.

And why? Did I not have the right to purchase this happiness? I feel *that,* at least, is owing for all my years of forbearance.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Still with the same dread.*] What have you done!

COUNT.

I cannot understand your tone of dread. Surely you do not fear that I shall ever betray the secret!

MRS. HAMLIN.

No. I know you too well for that. The betrayal will never come from you. But I have a strange premonition that this will bring no good.

COUNT.

Nonsense. [*Lightly.*] I know those premonitions of old. [*Changing the subject.*] I should love to say good bye to Rose.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Not yet. [*Comes back to the subject.*] Who were the lawyers?

COUNT.

A firm, recommended to me, by the way, by some friends of yours, the Winfield-Chases. You know Mrs. Winfield-Chase.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Of course. Of course. What was the firm?

COUNT.

Hargraves.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Did you consult Mr. Hargraves?

COUNT.

No. He handed me over to his junior partner, who seemed to be a specialist on wills and bequests.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Mr. Fred Garvin?

COUNT.

You know him?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Seems struck dumb.*]

COUNT.

[*After a puzzled silence.*] Why, what is the matter?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With self-control.*] Oh, nothing. You must go—you must leave me to work out this problem by myself. I feared the practical side of your romance. My worst fears are realized. [*Rising.*] We will talk no further of this now, but before you close your eyes to-night, pray—*pray* as you never prayed before, that no harm may come of this.

COUNT.

Won't you explain?

MRS. HAMLIN.

No—in a week—in a month, perhaps—there may be more to say, though if your prayers are heard there will *not* be—but until then—good bye.

COUNT.

And you do not wish me to wait and see——?

MRS. HAMLIN.

No—no—— [*Extending her hand.*] Good bye!

COUNT.

[*Taking her hand, and kissing it with deep feeling.*] Good bye. [*As he goes to the door he encounters* ROSE *entering.*] Good bye, Miss Rose—or perhaps—au revoir. [*He speaks in a gentle, winning tone, and holding her hand, gazes deeply at her.*]

ROSE.

[*Simply.*] Au revoir. [*Releases her hand.*]

[*He bows and goes off.*]

[MRS. HAMLIN, *overcome and limp, sits broodingly, as* ROSE *hurries down to her.*]

ROSE.

[*Gaily.*] Mother, it's four o'clock. Do you think I'd better dress for a motor ride? That's no doubt what Fred is coming so early for.

MRS. HAMLIN.

No, I think not.

ROSE.

[*With concern.*] What is the matter, mother?

MRS. HAMLIN.

I am not very well.

ROSE.

What has happened?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Evasively.*] I have heard bad news from old friends through the Count.

ROSE.

He might have spared you any bad news.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Not everybody is so considerate.

ROSE.

Perhaps I might lighten the burden for you.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*As if coming to a sudden resolve.*] Rose—sit down—I want to speak with you.

ROSE.

[*Eagerly seizing a footstool, and seating herself at her mother's feet.*] Yes, mother.

MRS. HAMLIN.

I am thinking that when Mr. Garvin comes, you'd better send him to *me*.

ROSE.

Yes? Why?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Why should he trouble your dear head with business? I am a little disappointed in Mr. Garvin for wishing to do so. It was not thoughtful of him.

ROSE.

Oh, I wouldn't say that.

MRS. HAMLIN.

The more I think of it, the more I disapprove. I have

noticed on several occasions that he shows a domineering way—a sort of "possession" in his manner towards you, that strikes me, to say the least, as premature.

ROSE.

[*Trying to smile it off.*] Why, that's what a young girl loves!—that is, from the man she means to marry.

MRS. HAMLIN.

He sends word in a peremptory way, "I shall be up at four," as if he were giving orders to his valet.

ROSE.

[*Growing distressed.*] I never heard you speak like that before.

MRS. HAMLIN.

I want you to be happy.

ROSE.

Happy? Mother! I could not imagine any happiness without him.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With growing alarm.*] Don't say that!

ROSE.

[*Infected by her alarm.*] Why not, mother?

MRS. HAMLIN.

No one has the right to make her life's happiness absolutely dependent upon another.

ROSE.

Not upon her future husband?

MRS. HAMLIN.

You are not married to him. If my soberer judgment discovers his faults, it is my duty to point them out to you before it is too late.

ROSE.

You have heard something to his discredit. It's a slander. That foreign Count has said something to prejudice you against him. [*In a tone of reproach.*] And you listened to him. [*With intense elation.*] Why, if the whole world rose up against him, he himself would be his own answer.

MRS. HAMLIN.

You are too emotional, my child—there is a vein of mediæval romance in your nature that I am unable to acc—— [*She stops short as its origin flashes through her mind, and finishes under her breath*] that surprises me.

ROSE.

Oh, mother, it hurts me to hear you say that. If I am ardent, and loving and passionate, am I not your daughter? [*With her arms about her mother's neck.*] Haven't you given me the nature I have? Hasn't love been my birthright?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Taking her in her arms.*] My darling Rose—I only want to school you, as I would school myself, against a disappointment. Now answer me calmly. What if you should learn that Mr. Garvin is not all that he should be?

ROSE.

That is not possible.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Heaven grant that what I feel may be only my foolish fancy. I only wished to probe your feelings, so that, should the unforeseen occur, you could meet it not wholly unprepared.

ROSE.

[*With growing intensity, almost to the point of violence.*] I *should* be wholly unprepared. No misgiving—no foolish fancy could alter my feelings. You *must* understand me, mother. If anything came between Fred and me I should not wish to live.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Aghast.*] Rose!

ROSE.

[*Continuing, in a torrent of emotion.*] I am not like other girls, mother—I sometimes tremble at myself. I have thanked God that the current of my life has flowed as it has, towards all that was good and beautiful. That same current might have turned in other ways, and then all the ardor, all the depth, all the intensity, might mean wreck and desolation. Oh, I know myself, and I am afraid.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*After a moment of restless anguish.*] Rose! My Rose!

ROSE.

I don't know what Love may mean to others. No book knowledge can define it for me. If I were a man, I suppose his spirit of possession might come nearer explaining it than anything else. But, mother—I am almost ashamed to own, I have that same spirit of possession—it rises and rises again—it fills my veins, it bewilders my thoughts.

For good or for evil—to have and to hold a passionate kinship with a dear one seems all there is in life!

[*She is quite overcome, and sinks on the sofa, burying her head in her hands.*]

[MRS. HAMLIN *goes to her and stands contemplatively over her.*]

[FRED GARVIN, *holding his hat in his hand, appears at the door.*]

FRED.

I took the liberty of coming up.

ROSE.

[*At the sound of his voice quickly recovers, and dashes towards him, all trace of her grief vanished.*] Fred!

[*He takes her in his arms.*]

FRED.

Why, you are not dressed for our spin. I thought you would take it for granted that I should come in my car.

ROSE.

[*Beaming.*] There, mother! Didn't I tell you! I shan't be a moment! [*Runs off excitedly.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Quietly.*] But you said you wanted to see her on business.

FRED.

[*Lightly.*] What of it! There is no law to prevent our talking business in a motor car.

MRS. HAMLIN.

It seemed a little odd to me that you should have tele-

phoned as you did, and left your office so early, for I know how busy you are.

FRED.

Oh, a man may indulge himself, once in a while.

MRS. HAMLIN.

To tell you the truth, I am a little relieved at your light tone.

FRED.

You were not alarmed, were you?

MRS. HAMLIN.

I was, almost——

FRED.

What business could that little girl and I have together, that would alarm anybody?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Quite so. I have been beset with misgivings of late. I dare say my doctor can prescribe for them.

FRED.

Misgivings? What about?

MRS. HAMLIN.

If you will lay aside your hat for a moment. [*He does so.*] Don't you care to talk over the matter, such as it is, with me before you speak to Rose?

FRED.

It seems hardly worth while.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Somehow, that doesn't ring true.

FRED.

No?

MRS. HAMLIN.

I don't think you would have made this special appointment if it hadn't been worth while.

FRED.

Well, what do you imagine? What was my motive?

MRS. HAMLIN.

What *was* it?

FRED.

[*With a laugh.*] Which of us is being cross-examined?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With calm seriousness.*] I may have done an unwise thing, but I have just had a serious talk with Rose.

FRED.

What about?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Beckons him to be seated.*] I wished to sound her feelings for you.

FRED.

Did they need sounding?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Appealingly.*] I beg of you, don't assume this careless tone. I have heard things—strange things—that have disconcerted me. I appeal to you as an old friend. Give me at least your sympathetic attention.

FRED.

[*Honestly.*] I assure you of that.

MRS. HAMLIN.

I had a visitor this afternoon. An old friend whom I had not seen in twenty years.

FRED.

Yes?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Do you not divine who it was?

FRED.

How can I?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Impatiently.*] I want an honest answer.

FRED.

Well, really, Mrs. Hamlin——

MRS. HAMLIN.

Did you not have a visitor this morning, who represented himself to be an old friend of ours?

FRED.

Of *yours?*

MRS. HAMLIN.

Of mine.

FRED.

Well—yes.

MRS. HAMLIN.

What did he have to say to you?

FRED.

Now, really, is it not straining our friendship a bit, to ask me to violate the sanctity of professional confidence?

MRS. HAMLIN.

These are mere words, Mr. Garvin—for if my premonitions are not absolutely groundless, you *intend* to violate it.

FRED.

[*A little resentful.*] What do you mean?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Would you be wanting to speak with Rose if that visit had not taken place?

FRED.

You are taking too much for granted.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Answer me.

FRED.

And if I decline?

MRS. HAMLIN.

I am already answered. And how did you mean to communicate the object of your visit to my daughter?

FRED.

How much of what took place do you know?

MRS. HAMLIN.

All.

FRED.

And does Rose——

MRS. HAMLIN.

She knows nothing. You understand how deeply I am concerned in what you have to say to her.

[*ENTER* ROSE, *ready for her ride.*]

ROSE.

Well, are you ready?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Not yet. Mr. Garvin and I are having a talk. I will send for you.

ROSE.

[*Protesting.*] But this isn't fair. Fred belongs to me.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With authority.*] Go. [*As* ROSE *reluctantly moves away.*] You may take off your coat and hat. I don't think you will need them.

ROSE.

Mother!

FRED.

[*Interceding.*] Do you think this is necessary?

ROSE.

[*Hurries to his side, holds his hand affectionately, with a look of appeal.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With a gesture bids her leave.*]

FRED.

[*Concernedly leads her to the door, and dismisses her tenderly.*] In a little while. [*She looks questioningly from one to the other, and goes out sadly.*]

FRED.

It seemed unnecessary to give her this pain.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Are you quite sure you did not have a greater in store for her?

FRED.

You seem determined to make me play an ungracious part.

MRS. HAMLIN.

All men are cowards. They work along the line of least resistance. Why could you not have come to me first?

FRED.

What I had to say concerned only Rose.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Slightly aghast.*] Surely you did no mean to tell her about——

FRED.

About what?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*After a moment's embarrassment.*] What you may have heard of *me.*

FRED.

If I had heard *anything,* is it likely?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With a slight bitterness.*] Violation of confidence, I suppose?

FRED.

Precisely. [*After a slight pause, during which he is evidently making up his mind.*] Mrs. Hamlin, you tell me you know the full purport of a certain visit to my office. Before I proceed—what was the name of my visitor?

MRS. HAMLIN.

The Count di Varesi.

FRED.

[*Nods his head.*] Now I want you to place yourself in my position. I am betrothed to your daughter. This client, absolutely unaware of my relations with your family, makes me the recipient, little by little, of information, touching upon the most intimate concerns of his life, and that of a certain woman, whose name, of course, is not mentioned. Imagine the thought that flashes through my mind, when I am instructed to make, in my client's name, the gift of a very large sum of money—to Rose Hamlin —your daughter.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Quickly.*] You asked his motive? You questioned him?

FRED.

I did not need to question.

MRS. HAMLIN.

He betrayed himself.

FRED.

No. No one could have dealt with greater delicacy with so difficult a task.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Then how——

FRED.

But remember. He was my client. It could not be a case of betraying himself. He charged me with secrecy. Without framing a single compromising question, I gathered, in a professional way, all that I needed to know. Facts are facts—even when they are unspoken.

MRS. HAMLIN.

And then you concluded at once that——

FRED.

Don't ask me to put my conclusions into words. Imagine, if you can, my feelings as a man, not as a lawyer—after he had gone. When the duty lay before me of calling upon Rose, to place in her possession this bounteous gift from an unknown friend.

MRS. HAMLIN.

You should have come to me.

FRED.

Why? To have given you needless pain and embarrassment? To tell you all that I knew—and all that I concluded? If you had not questioned me as you have done, do you think you would ever have heard from me, that——

MRS. HAMLIN.

Then what would you have told Rose?

FRED.

No more than it was necessary for her to know.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Perhaps I have done you an injustice. Perhaps I have misinterpreted your object in seeking this speedy visit to Rose. In that case, I ask your pardon. In my great worry and excitement I feared for her happiness. Of course, no blame can attach to *her*. It could not affect your feelings for *her*. For a moment I dreaded your drive with her this afternoon, lest you should betray even in the

slightest degree a change of heart towards her. [*Slight pause.*] You don't answer?

FRED.

What answer do you expect?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With a return of all her previous misgivings.*] You are keeping something back from me.

FRED.

[*With an almost cynical smile, and a vain gesture of trying to answer.*] Well!

MRS. HAMLIN.

You *did* mean to reveal something to her. It was as I feared. You did mean to wound her. What would you have told her?

FRED.

[*Uncomfortably.*] There are a hundred ways of breaking off an engagement, without——

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Dismayed.*] Breaking off an engagement! You don't mean that!

FRED.

Why, in my position——

MRS. HAMLIN.

It is cowardly. It is cruel. It will break her heart!

FRED.

[*With irritating lightness.*] I hope not.

MRS. HAMLIN.

I tell you it will. You don't know how she loves you.

FRED.

It will be a painful task.

MRS. HAMLIN.

This can't be. It must not be.

FRED.

I don't want to add to your distress. It is an irksome situation. I had hoped to avoid this interview.

MRS. HAMLIN.

And let Rose face her misery alone! That *would* have been brave of you.

FRED.

A man can't always be brave.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*With growing intensity and betraying fear for herself.*] I don't trust you, Mr. Garvin. You and your cant about the violating of confidence. When Rose demands the cause from you, you will tell her.

FRED.

You need have no alarm on that score, I——

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*As before.*] I don't trust you. If you are cowardly enough to break off the engagement through no fault of hers, you would not stop at that.

FRED.

There are some duties a man owes to himself and society.

MRS. HAMLIN.

To society! Faugh!

FRED.

Of course I cannot expect you to hold the same views on that subject as I have.

MRS. HAMLIN.

And who are *you*—and what claims do you possess, that you dare take this tone with *me?*

FRED.

[*With great cynicism.*] It is only those whose claims on society are beyond cavil who can afford to despise it.

MRS. HAMLIN.

You shall not do this thing! Do you understand me! If your engagement is to be broken off, it shall be broken off by *me.*

FRED.

As you choose.

MRS. HAMLIN.

I shall call in Rose, and end all between you.

FRED.

If your method seems less harsh——

MRS. HAMLIN.

Harsh! [*With a look of contempt at him, she goes to the door and calls.*] Rose! Rose!

FRED.

What are you going to say to her?

MRS. HAMLIN.

I shall tell her that you are not worthy to be her husband.

FRED.

I protest!

MRS. HAMLIN.

And it is the truth. You are absolutely unworthy of her. And she shall learn it from my lips.

[*ENTER* ROSE.]

ROSE.

Well, are you all through?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*In excitement.*] A little while ago, I told you that I had heard things about Mr. Garvin that made me doubt the wisdom of your marriage.

ROSE.

And I wouldn't believe them.

MRS. HAMLIN.

I have given Mr. Garvin a chance to defend himself. He has failed to do so.

ROSE.

[*Going to him, with honest conviction.*] I hope you understand that it is not I who ask you for a defense. [*To* MRS. HAMLIN.] Mother, you had no right to question the man I love.

MRS. HAMLIN.

You are a foolish, romantic child. I know a mother's duties.

ROSE.

It is too late to question him now. When I told him I

would become his wife, it was because I loved him—for what he is—not for what he had been, or might become. [*To* FRED.] You know that I trust you, don't you—and that nothing can make any difference between us.

FRED.

Yes, Rose, but——

ROSE.

But what?

FRED.

I can't ignore your mother's attitude—and if we must part——

ROSE.

[*With deepest anguish.*] Part!

FRED.

I must try to bear the pain of it as best I may.

ROSE.

Pain! My God! Do you know what you are saying?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Come, Rose. When we are alone, we will try to bear it together.

ROSE.

No—I shall not go. I will let no shadow kill the happiness of our lives. [*To him.*] I don't know what terrible lie has come between us, but tell her, Fred, my darling [*clings to him*] that it is a lie. You can't be unworthy.

FRED.

No—I am not unworthy.

ROSE.

[*Triumphing.*] I knew it, mother!

MRS. HAMLIN.

But all the same I have decided.

ROSE.

[*Flashing upon her mother.*] How can *you* decide, mother?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Evasively.*] Fred is going away.

ROSE.

Where is he going?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*As before.*] Not here—not now. Come.

ROSE.

[*To her mother—pleading.*] Oh, leave me with him—just for a moment.

FRED.

[*Going to* MRS. HAMLIN.] Only for one moment. You need not fear. It shall be as you desire.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Going.*] I shall return in a few minutes. [*Clasping* ROSE *in her arms.*] My darling—forgive me for the pain and sorrow of it—but it has to be—it has to be. [*She goes out.*]

[ROSE *is about to speak.*]

FRED.

[*Immediately plunging into the subject, without waiting for* ROSE *to speak*] [*in a calm tone.*] Just a moment, Rose,

before we lose ourselves in feeling. There is a matter of business that I must dispose of first—the business that brought me here.

ROSE.

What do I care for that?

FRED.

Just one moment, dear; listen as calmly as you can. Your birthday will occur to-morrow. I am the custodian of a rich present for you—a deed of gift has been prepared——

ROSE.

[*With agonized impatience.*] Why do you speak of that *now?*

FRED.

[*Continuing calmly.*] An old friend, who asks to be nameless, has given you, through our firm, the sum of two million florins. The documents are now preparing, you will be in possession of your fortune before to-morrow night. [ROSE *has been staring at him.*] You are listening —you understand, do you not—I want all this clear before we part.

ROSE.

But we are not going to part.

FRED.

We are, Rose.

ROSE.

[*Speaking with suffering.*] W-why!

FRED.

Your mother has told you.

ROSE.

She has told me nothing.

FRED.

What does the cause matter, since it must be.

ROSE.

Don't you love me?

FRED.

I *did* love [*seeing her tortured expression*]—I do love you; but something has come between us—that is difficult for me to explain.

ROSE.

I know the fault is not yours, in spite of what mother says.

FRED.

I appreciate your trust in me—I am trying to be candid with you—but your mother has made it hard. I cannot play the hero, or the hypocrite. Let *her* explain it to you—when I am gone—if she chooses to explain. It is a duty that I owe to myself—that's all. Good bye.

ROSE.

[*Agonized.*] Don't go—not yet—I must understand. [*Trying to be calm.*] The business that brought you to-day—tell me about that.

FRED.

I have told you already. A gift to you of two million florins.

ROSE.

By whom?

FRED.

A stranger.

ROSE.

Your going has something to do with this gift. What is the mystery; who is the stranger; what is he to me?

FRED.

All this is for your mother to answer.

ROSE.

[*As the truth gradually glimmers.*] Two million florins. Why *florins?* Since the visit of that man her manner has changed. He was an Italian. Florins! Fred, has all that has happened come through that man? [*He doesn't answer.*] Who is he? What is he to me?

FRED.

What does it matter?

ROSE.

Matter! Since it is to separate us? What have I done? What have I done that I should be punished like this?

FRED.

You have done nothing, Rose, even if, in the eyes of the world, you must bear your share of the guilt.

ROSE.

[*Stunned.*] Guilt?

FRED.

At least that is what the world would call it. We do not make the laws of society, we only obey them.

ROSE.

That Italian—who is he? Who is he?

FRED.

Don't ask me, Rose.

ROSE.

You must tell me! I must know.

FRED.

He is your—— [*Checking himself, he walks away from her.*]

ROSE.

[*Finishing falteringly.*] Father! [*She sinks overcome on the seat in silence, and as* FRED *turns away, she adds in a tone of deep sorrow.*] And that is why you are leaving me?

FRED.

I must. Some day you will understand.

ROSE.

I shall never understand. I only know that through all the pain of future years I shall be asking why you are leaving me now.

FRED.

Because I cannot make you my wife. [*She looks up in mute appeal.*] I could not clear the stain from your name by marrying you; I would only besmirch my own.

ROSE.

The stain upon my name! Then there is one——

FRED.

At least—if I were to make you my wife—— [*He hesitates as she winces under his words.*]

ROSE.

Then I am not worthy to be your wife?

FRED.

I didn't say that—not in those words—I only meant——

ROSE.

Nor any man's wife. [*She breaks down completely.*]

FRED.

[*Trying vainly to comfort her.*] It is not your fault, Rose—it is not your fault.

[*She sobs bitterly.*]

[*ENTER* MRS. HAMLIN.]

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Seeing her daughter's collapse, and going to her.*] My darling, what has happened? [*To* FRED *fiercely.*] You have not kept faith with me.

FRED.

[*Irritated.*] Why should I blacken my own character? Why should I defend *you!*

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Under her breath, pointing to the door.*] Go!

FRED.

[*After a pause of hesitation, leaves abruptly.*]

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Taking her in her arms.*] My poor, poor girl—what has he told you?

ROSE.

[*Finding her voice.*] What does it matter?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Under her breath.*] The coward! I never trusted him.

ROSE.

Don't talk like that, mother—he was all I had in the world.

MRS. HAMLIN.

My darling—you will understand some day—and you will learn to forgive me!

ROSE.

[*As if coming out of a trance with the echo of her mother's last words.*] Forgive you?

MRS. HAMLIN.

For the grief that I have caused you—yes, darling, it was I, but you must forgive me—you *will* forgive me.

ROSE.

You are my mother. How can I have anything to forgive you?

MRS. HAMLIN.

But you must tell me now that you *do* forgive me.

ROSE.

[*Trying calmly to reason it out.*] What have I to forgive?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Embracing her passionately.*] More, more than you know.

ROSE.

He left me, though no fault of mine. Do you ask me to forgive you for that?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Yes—yes—— But you don't say it. I am begging you to say it. You don't say it!

ROSE.

Forgive you for breaking my heart? [*She weeps on her mother's shoulder, then recovers, shaking her head slowly, as if it were impossible.*] No—no——

MRS. HAMLIN.

Don't say that you will not forgive me. Oh, my darling, through all my years of suffering you have been the one recompense of my life.

ROSE.

[*In a hollow voice.*] Something has changed in me—some chord has snapped. I am terrified. Where is all the love that has been in my heart for you?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Alarmed.*] You do not hate me?

ROSE.

How could I hate you! I don't understand. What is this bitterness that is taking possession of me? Oh, mother —what does it mean?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Rose!

ROSE.

What crime have I committed that I am made to suffer like this?

MRS. HAMLIN.

But it was no fault of yours—— He told you it was no fault of yours.

ROSE.

[*Bitter to the core.*] No fault of mine! Who dares make me suffer through no fault of mine?

MRS. HAMLIN.

Time will heal all, my darling.

ROSE.

No. There is no healing. You knew what was going to happen when you spoke to me of giving him up. You will recall my answer. If anything comes between us I shall not care to live.

MRS. HAMLIN.

But you did not mean it!

ROSE.

Yes, I meant it then—and I mean it now.

MRS. HAMLIN.

Rose—you would not punish me like this—you would not condemn me unheard.

ROSE.

He told me there was a stain upon my name—that I am not fit to be any man's wife.

MRS. HAMLIN.

The coward!

ROSE.

He was right—— Then what is the life that such as I can live?

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*In terror.*] Rose! Rose!

ROSE.

I have often wondered how they came to be lost—these helpless lives cast upon the world, selling their beauty in the market place. They had lost their love; they had lost

their souls; it was no fault of theirs—it was no fault of theirs!

MRS. HAMLIN.

But you must not speak like this—I forbid it!

ROSE.

Ha! What am I better than they! Am I more fit than they to be an honest man's wife? Mother! This is the end! This is the end!

MRS. HAMLIN.

Don't, Rose—it is too terrible! [*In horror.*]

ROSE.

I will take the money that belongs to me. Mine in payment of my share of the *guilt.* Mother, do you understand me? I am going away.

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Wrung with dismay.*] What will become of you?

ROSE.

Who cares? What do they expect of such as I? They shall not be disappointed, those of that fine world to which he belongs! They write in a clear hand the doom of those whose names are stained—through no fault of theirs! I have done with them, I have done with them all! There is but one task in life before me. To forget—to forget!

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Trying to interrupt.*] Not *me!* Not *me!*

ROSE.

[*Continuing in a torrent of feeling.*] Yes—and to be forgotten.

MRS. HAMLIN.

No—Rose—my daughter!

ROSE.

Yes, forgotten. And you will be glad enough to forget me when I have gone out of your life, out of your world—when I have joined those who have become what I shall become—— When I have found my place among——

MRS. HAMLIN.

[*Falling on her knees in supplicating anguish.*] Don't say it! Don't say it!

ROSE.

[*With a final outcry of despair.*] Among THOSE! Among THOSE!

[*Dashes out in great emotion, leaving her mother utterly overcome, as the curtain falls.*]

End of Act I.

ACT II.

LAPSE OF ONE YEAR.

SCENE: A secluded section of a popular restaurant in the American colony at Nice, France, cut off by shrubbery from the main dining room, which is supposed to be off at the back, whence the sounds of an orchestra playing are heard.

[*At a table to the right are discovered* WALTER HOBART *and* EDWIN FORD.

[HOBART *is scribbling on the cheap paper which professional writers use, which is piled around him, and he scatters sheets as fast as he fills them.*] [FORD, *in a brown study, is smoking a cigarette, and sipping absinthe.*]

HOBART.

[*Apologetically, but writing feverishly.*] Just a minute, old man. I mustn't let this idea get away from me. Can't afford it.

FORD.

[*Indifferently.*] Don't mind me.

HOBART.

[*After writing furiously for a spell.*] There! [*Gathers up the sheets and makes a pile of them.*] Now I can be

human once more—but there's something about this café that whips my brain into action. When future generations shall discuss the personal habits of that great writer, Walter Hobart, who flourished—well, we won't say flourished—existed—in the twentieth century, it shall be observed that his most fantastic conceits were born at a little iron table at the Café des Americains at Nice, France, usually in the early afternoon, after a meal that may be called breakfast, or lunch, according to one's geography. But here I am, prattling away like an untrammeled child of nature—when, after all, the main object of my bringing you here was to rouse you out of yourself.

FORD.

[*Listlessly.*] Thank you. [*He prepares himself another decoction of absinthe.*]

HOBART.

[*Continuing lightly.*] But you decline to be roused—except so far as continual libations of that vile green fluid can rouse you—and that is depressing. Brace up, old man, and be gay. If you can't be *gay,* be as gay as you can.

FORD.

If I could scribble like you, perhaps I could scribble myself into a condition of gaiety like yours. It must be a great relief to you to be able to shed your gloom on sheets of paper like that. You always seem so much brighter for it.

HOBART.

Your diagnosis is wrong. The gaiety you notice is only the relief in having got the stuff out of my system.

FORD.

But to be able to express one's pent-up feelings in writing! It is a great privilege.

HOBART.

That's the amateur idea of it. You don't suppose I write because I have pent-up feelings to express. Tut, tut—likewise, go to! I write because I get paid by the word—and the largest portion of my income is derived from dodging every possible feeling with a sort of glib fecundity.

FORD.

Don't tell me you don't feel what you write. I have read your writings.

HOBART.

If I have cheated you into that belief, all the better. That's what I am paid for. But imagine the large assortment of feelings I should have to have on tap to exude all the different things I put on paper. Here I am—a hireling, at the beck and call of an itinerant yachtsman—whose one redeeming quality is his appreciation of my versatility. Today, I am employed to do the Riviera for his paper, in my finest Rabelaisian style—next week, I may be his Sunday Editor in New York. Ha! In this age of near-silk—near-rubber—and, near-eggs—I am a near-genius!

FORD.

[*With a light laugh, takes another drink.*]

HOBART.

I am glad to have wrested a smile from you. That's encouraging. Though I don't approve of these frequent visits to the absinthe bottle. [*With a serious change of manner.*]

Now look here, Ford, you're an unhappy man. I have known you fairly intimately for a short time. I know there is some sorrow tucked away in your inner consciousness, and in due course of time you will reveal it to me. I am not pressing you to seek that relief until you are ready, but to try to drown it in drink is a damned bad way.

FORD.

Pshaw! Don't shift the conversation from you to me—you won't be half so amusing.

HOBART.

Oh, I am not always amusing. I have a side that borders on the lugubrious. Didn't you read my "Under Life at Monte Carlo"? That was warranted to give the doldrums to Sunny Jim.

FORD.

Yes, I did read it—and I didn't agree with all your conclusions, either. Vice is not all black—your gaming table is Monte Carlo may solace many an aching heart, and your dazzling beauties—your light-o'-loves, dwelling in seductive villas, may be balm to bruised spirits. I hate these fixed lines of demarcation between vice and virtue. What is virtue? Where do we find it?

HOBART.

I'll suggest that as one of the prize questions for a Sunday issue.

FORD.

And how shall we know when we have found it? Come, my brilliant magazinist—define it to me—in a word, if you can—— What is virtue?

HOBART.

[*After a slight pause.*] Inexperience!

FORD.

Fine! And the logical deduction is, that as experience comes, virtue departs!

HOBART.

Yes—that's a *kind* of logic—but whether the result of keen perception, or too much absinthe, I can't determine.

FORD.

And even this much-abused friend of mine [*indicating the absinthe*] suffers from a ruined reputation. Heaven knows he has done more to alleviate sorrow than many a paid nurse.

HOBART.

You are morbid to-day. Something tells me you're on the point of a confession. Well, out with it—who was she?

FORD.

You conclude then, there was a *she*.

HOBART.

That question seems almost childish.

FORD.

Yes, there *was* a she. And if I have wiped out these imaginary lines between vice and virtue, it is because of *her*.

HOBART.

You are pitching your remarks in such a high key of rhetoric that I am not sure I get you. You were in love once. You were jilted?

FORD.

Jilted! Ha!

HOBART.

Well, others have been. And they have become better citizens for it. They didn't make it their excuse for deifying drink.

FORD.

But it destroyed my belief in virtue. That is the bitter part of it. And when you say jilted—you are merely groping. No, I was not jilted, I was betrayed. I was humiliated. It turned my holiest thoughts of love to shame. Do you begin to understand?

HOBART.

Go on.

FORD.

But why should I tell you this? You are a professional writer. What does a man's heartache mean to you, except more copy.

HOBART.

[*With sincerity, as he takes* FORD'S *hand.*] Now, understand me, Ford, I am not coercing you into a confession. If you make one, I shall value and respect it. It may make you happier. I have grown fond of you since we became friends in Paris, and I have tried to prove a good companion to you, though I have not bragged about it. I shall always try to ring true. That's all I have to say about it. So speak, or remain silent, as you will.

FORD.

[*With something like enthusiasm.*] Do you know, Wal-

ter, one grip of the hand from a friend like you, is worth all the blandishments of all the women in the world.

HOBART.

I won't say that—but we won't dispute about it.

FORD.

A year ago I was engaged to be married to one of the prettiest girls in New York. She was a good girl, a well-bred girl, a highly educated girl—you know the type. Rich, pampered, and all that sort of thing. If there ever was a girl who had no excuse for going wrong, it was she. One of those open-eyed, child-women that enchain a man's very soul with their apparent innocence. I loved her. The wedding day was fixed. I called at her home one day, and found a note. I have never seen her since. That innocence was all a sham! She had given herself, for no apparent reason, into the arms of some libertine, who appealed to her, as I evidently did not, in some mysterious sex way, that the world has never been quite able to define. But she was innocent! She was virtuous! Do you wonder now, why I resent these fixed catalogues of vice and virtue! In her note she had the grace to admit that it was through no fault of mine that she threw me over. As if that mitigated the suffering, the shame, the disgrace. I have sought to forget her in travel and dissipation. But that is the mockery of it! Drink doesn't do it! The promiscuous pursuit of other women doesn't do it—though, I still persevere at both. And when I read your learned essays that are guide posts to vice and virtue, I laugh at you, for vice and virtue are interchangeable terms, and have only such meaning as we choose to give them. [*Slight pause.*]

HOBART.

There is nothing strange in your story. There is nothing new—except your conclusions. Your's happens to be the man's side of it. I dare say, somewhere in the world, there is the exact counterpart of it on the woman's side. We are all Children of Destiny. Do you think *that* woman would be justified in maintaining that honor among *all* men was only a name, because of *her* one unhappy experience?

FORD.

I shouldn't blame her.

HOBART.

This goes deeper than blame. It evokes a sorrow that makes kinship. I am older than you, Edwin, and I have graduated from the college you have just entered. I have gone through all the classes that have intervened since my first lesson in heartache. You have taken up the primary studies of absinthe and loose women. You will ripen into a proper sense of proportion some day, and then you won't mistake the gaming table for a nerve tonic, nor a secluded villa for a sanitarium. [*In a lighter tone.*] Let me read you a paragraph I have just written in my special article. [*Finding his place.*] It deals directly with the Gilded Women of the Riviera. [*Reads.*] "And here, holding high court, with a train of her own, that includes crowned heads, and others not so crowned, we find one more beautiful and more radiant than her any of her frail sisters." [*Speaks.*] I single this one out to you as permitting of no argument as to where virtue leaves off, and vice begins. [*Reads.*] "She has but recently invaded the charmed circle of Monte Carlo. Her villa is one of the most de-

lightfully situated on the dreamy slope, lapped by the beautiful blue sea. She is reputedly an American, though some of us detect a slightly foreign accent, which, however, may be assumed, for it adds to her witchery, and a certain vague mystery that surrounds her. From whatever source it comes, she seems well supplied with money, which she spends lavishly. There is even a mystery as to her present favorite—she has not identified herself with any particular one, she is cultivating a sort of salon for her worshippers—and with it all she carries, paradoxically enough—a certain air that seems to say: 'I am what I am—and if you ask me to feel ashamed, I refuse.' She calls herself Rosamond—possibly in honor of Swinburne. She certainly suggests the amorous metres of the late poet." [*As he lays down his script, he looks up.*]

FORD.

[*Quietly.*] I have met her.

HOBART.

So have I. How do I describe her?

FORD.

Very well, except that you take her vocation for granted.

HOBART.

[*With a laugh.*] Don't you?

FORD.

I don't want to place myself in the position of defending these frail sisters as you call them—but I have ceased placing them in a class by themselves.

HOBART.

What do you gain by that?

FORD.

A greater poet than you has said: "Frailty, thy name is woman." He meant *"women,"* of course.

HOBART.

If he did, he was a bad grammarian.

FORD.

And when that same poet moaned, "Oh, that we can call these delicate creatures ours, and not their appetites," he wasn't thinking only of *professional* frailty—if I may coin the phrase.

HOBART.

The long and short of it, Ford, is that you are so embittered against one woman, that it has made you morbid and unreal. I refuse to believe that your true self does not make just the same distinctions that I do.

FORD.

I can only pray that the years may restore the faith I lost.

HOBART.

And until then, let me give you a bit of calm, cold-blooded advice. [*After a slight pause.*] Keep clear of this mysterious Rosamond.

FORD.

Why do you single *her* out?

HOBART.

Shall I tell you honestly? Because I have seen you with her. [*Ford indicates surprise.*] I have seen her weaving her toils about you. I know the danger.

FORD.

Danger! Ha!

HOBART.

Don't laugh. She is more gifted in her craft than any woman I ever knew. She has power to incite, that is perfect art. She knows when to yield, and when to deny. She knows the market value of coldness and indifference, and she trades on these qualities. She can be select almost to the point of prudery, and she can hold you—hold you till the end of time! And her price is high.

FORD.

What do you know of that?

HOBART.

There is a meaning to that word beyond money; though even in that regard she might bankrupt you. Yes—even *you*—with your ample fortune.

FORD.

I don't think you need worry on that score.

HOBART.

And there is a greater price—the enslaving of your manhood—the surrender of your self-respect——

FORD.

Why, you are speaking with real feeling, or am I deceiving myself again? Is that only another trick of your trade?

HOBART.

I use my tricks only when I write. I could tell a story of my own if I chose—but it would begin and end differently from yours. It would start with the degradation,

from which I have emerged, and close with the promise of a new and cleaner life—with the girl I am going to marry.

FORD.

You are going to marry? This is news to me.

HOBART.

I met her this summer, doing the Continent with her mother. She is a Washington girl. She has got as far as Nice, on her way to Monte Carlo, where I am to help her open her eyes, her beautiful young eyes. She is due here in a little while; when she comes, I will present you.

FORD.

Let me wish you joy—[*Sighs*]—if there is such a thing.

HOBART.

[*Going to the door of the "salle."*] I will cast an eye about the main hall. She may have arrived. [*Returning with some agitation.*] Ford, that woman has just entered the dining room with that simpering old roué in her train.

FORD.

[*With a laugh.*] Julius Langhorn! She doesn't care a button for him!

HOBART.

Oh, you know that, do you? She has told you?

FORD.

I knew she was coming here, and with him.

HOBART.

This American colony of ours is responsible for some weird conceits! Julius Langhorn! A sprightly young lambkin, about ninety in the shade, I should think.

FORD.

But he adores youth and beauty. That keeps him young.

HOBART.

And childish. How can she bother with that old fool?

FORD.

Oh, she will get rid of him soon enough!

HOBART.

Oh—you know that, do you?

FORD.

Oh, yes.

HOBART.

Perhaps she expects to find you here?

FORD.

Perhaps.

HOBART.

[*Heaves a sigh, and makes a gesture of despair.*]

[*ENTER* MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE, *followed by* LAURA. LAURA *hangs back and looks off.*]

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Oh, here you are! Laura said you would be in the most secluded spot.

HOBART.

Yes, you see we are cut off here by the shrubbery—and we escape the noise and glitter. Here is where we invite our soul. Will you permit me? Mrs. Winfield-Chase—Mr. Edwin Ford.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Extending her hand.*] I am happy to meet you. [*Call-*

ing to her daughter.] Laura! What ails you, my dear! You haven't greeted Walter. [LAURA *does so, abstractedly.*] And this is Walter's friend, Mr. Ford.

LAURA.

How do you do? [*Bows.*]

HOBART.

What is the matter? You seem abstracted!

LAURA.

I saw a face just now that haunts me.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

She is forever seeing faces that haunt her. We couldn't go anywhere on the Continent without everybody, from the *concierge* of the hotel, to the soldier in the sentry box reminding her of some one else. She even took the Emperor Francis Joseph for Doctor Cook!

[*Ford drifts off the scene.*]

HOBART.

What face is it this time?

LAURA.

Who is that woman—dressed so strikingly, with a certain Italian air?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Now, Laura—what do you care to know about that class of woman for?

LAURA.

What do you know of her class, mother?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Don't snap me up, Laura—it is a pretty safe conclusion

that any of these over-gowned women circulating about places like this with eccentric escorts, belong to a class.

LAURA.

Her eccentric escort happens to be your particular friend, Mr. Langhorn.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Annoyed.*] The idea! [*Appealing to* HOBART.] Now, you have experience, and even more than ordinary sense. [*He bows.*] What am I to do with a man with so little discrimination, that he can follow in *my* train one moment, and the next be dangling after—well—after such as that?

HOBART.

[*Amused.*] That's cosmopolitan laxity.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Cosmopolitan impudence, I call it! And we are to be his guests here for lunch. I shall talk plainly with Mr. Langhorn. I make all allowance for his over-done geniality. He *must* beam. He can't help himself. But I can't have him beaming all over the place when I am around; it hurts my pride, and it rather impairs my social standing.

HOBART.

[*With a laugh.*] You are quite right.

LAURA.

[*To* HOBART.]

But all this time, you are leaving my question unanswered? Who is that woman?

HOBART.

[*Seriously to her.*] Why do you wish to know?

LAURA.

I know her! [*Rising and facing her mother.*] I tell you, mother, it is Rose Hamlin!

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Quite agitated.*] Why, Laura, this is preposterous. [*Explaining hurriedly to* HOBART.] The daughter of one of my dearest friends! [*To* LAURA.] I don't see how you dare imagine such a thing. That simple, innocent girl—and this notorious woman!

LAURA.

Who knows by what road she came from *then* to *now?*

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

You are carrying your vagaries too far.

LAURA.

Why has she not written me in all these months?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

You know she left Washington and went to Arizona with her mother to join her father.

LAURA.

That's what her mother wrote you.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Yes.

LAURA.

And what about her marriage that was to have taken place within the year? We haven't even received our invitation.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Even so, must you jump at the most unreasonable and illogical conclusion?

LAURA.

You cannot argue down that face, mother. [*Turning to* HOBART.] Walter, *who* is she?

HOBART.

I know nothing of her antecedents, and *who* she is matters less now than *what* she is. And for that reason, my dear, we will leave her out of our conversation. [*They continue in an undertone.*]

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Seeing the entering* LANGHORN, *in a high note of agitation.*] Ah, there you are!

[*ENTER* LANGHORN.]

[*He is a very young, very old man, with white curly hair, a florid face, and twinkling feet. He chirps his remarks, flits in his movements, and has an infectious chuckle.*]

LANGHORN.

My dear, dear, dear Mrs. Winfield-Chase. Here you are —here you are—here you are!

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

And don't you think it's about time for you to report?

LANGHORN.

High time, indeed—that's why I'm reporting. This is the table I've secured. Secluded—eh? Far from the madding crowd. What? [*Goes to it.*]

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Far from any waiter, I should say.

LANGHORN.

I've attended to that. Lunch is ordered. Hardly a *lunch*. Just a bite. You know—one of my tasty bites. Trust your Julius for that!

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

My Julius, indeed! I'll have a word or two to say on that subject in a moment. In the meanwhile—— [*Calling over to* HOBART.] Mr. Hobart, I want to present Mr. Langhorn—— He doesn't deserve it—but I can't very well help myself.

LANGHORN.

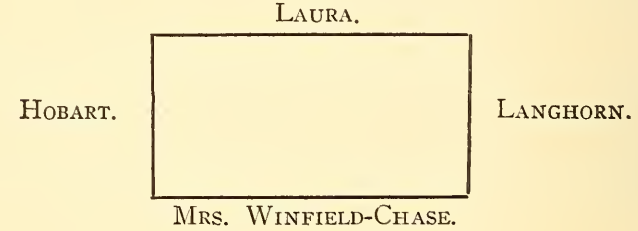
[*Twinkles over to him and grasps him by the hand.*] Delighted to meet you, Mr. Hobart. Very, very, very! Heard of you ever so many times—ever so many nice things. It pleases her ladyship [*with a comic guilty look at* MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.] to be bitter in her *present* mood toward me—but I'm an old and devoted slave and admirer, and as such, am entitled to some little recognition. Eh? [*Twinkles over to her.*] Say something pleasant! [*Twinkles back to* HOBART.] I have ordered for four—four—let me see, that's right, isn't it? [*Counting noses.*] Though, if appreciation could be expressed in figures, I should have made it fourteen. [*Indicating.*] One, two, three, *us*—and Mrs. Winfield-Chase the other eleven. Ha! Ha! Ha!

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

I wish, Mr. Langhorn, you wouldn't flutter so much, you make me nervous.

LANGHORN.

Must flutter—can't help it. I was born fluttering! Ah, there you are! [*This to a waiter, who enters with luncheon, which is laid on table.*] Shall we be seated? [*Indicates the places of the four.*]



[*The waiter serves the luncheon, making the necessary exits and entrances. At the conclusion* LANGHORN *signs bill for the meal. In the meanwhile* LAURA *and* HOBART *become absorbed in each other as if continuing silently a previous argument, during which the other pair enjoy their luncheon, which they diversify with the following conversation, to distant strains of lively music.*]

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Now, let me hear your explanation—and, I hope, your apology.

LANGHORN.

Apology? Oh, you mean—what *do* you mean?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Is it necessary, in order that you may keep up your highly strung cosmopolitan air, that you should widen the cir-

cle of your acquaintance, until it gets beyond the border line of respectability?

LANGHORN.

Oh, I see! You mean—what *do* you mean?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Hopelessly.*] You certainly have the gift of seeming artless.

LANGHORN.

Seeming! I *am* artless! I am a child! I *do* no wrong, because I *see* no wrong!

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Then what do I want you to apologize for?

LANGHORN.

That's what I should like to know.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*Severely.*] For showing so little tact, not to use a harsher word—as to make me share your attentions with questionable characters.

LANGHORN.

Questionable characters?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

You were spending your time with one of them, just immediately before joining me.

LANGHORN.

I don't know what you call spending your time. I am on nodding terms with all classes and conditions of men, not to say women. They say a cat may look at a king—and I suppose the reverse is equally true.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

As you are neither king nor cat, I don't respond to your argument.

LANGHORN.

Always epigrammatic! I have always maintained it—you have a saliency that borders on the sublime! You are in brief—by Jove, you *are*—you know you *are!*

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

I am very sorry you were compelled to give up your attractive tête-à-tête from a sense of duty to us.

LANGHORN.

Don't shrivel my sensitive nature with needless reproaches. Everybody makes allowances for Julius. He can flit from flower to flower, and leave no more harm in his wake than so much traveling sunshine. Don't frown on me, Miriam—the time has come when I must call you Miriam—I can stand anything but your frown. The world grows gray when Miriam frowns, and I lose my youth. And what would I be without my youth! I *was* seen in company with—well, with that baffling beauty—but only for a moment. She seemed lonesome. She seemed looking for somebody she didn't find. And I went up to her and said: "You are not looking for *me,* are you?"

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

The impertinence!

LANGHORN.

You see, I had met her before. Not met her exactly. Just been introduced—no, not exactly that, either. Anyhow, I knew who she was, and she knew that I knew, and

when I said: "You are not looking for *me?*" she smiled, and answered: "I didn't *know* that I was." Now that struck me as rather clever. She didn't *know* that she was. Maybe she *was,* and didn't know it. Ha! Ha! And I was prepared to argue it out with her, when the other one arrives.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Which other one?

LANGHORN.

The young man she evidently *was* looking for. [*By this time the others have become interested.*] For she joined him, and they strolled off—and I—[*sheepishly*]—came here.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

It was very good of you.

HOBART.

What was the other young man like?

LANGHORN.

Other young, is good! Ha! Ha! Friend of yours? At least, I suppose he was, for the first thing she said to him was, "How did you leave our friend Hobart?"

LAURA.

Then she knows you?

HOBART.

Yes—and no—— [*Stops short and changes the subject.*] If we are to catch that five o'clock train, we had better be starting.

LANGHORN.

Don't you want me to motor you over?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Laura and Mr. Hobart have arranged to go by train.

LANGHORN.

But that needn't prevent our——

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

[*With fine irony.*] I don't think I care to jeopardize my reputation by being seen alone with you all that way.

LANGHORN.

Now, my dear—don't be cruel. Bear and forbear. Think of the Julius that is all yours—the Julius as you want him to be—for he is many kinds of a Julius, and when you've settled on just what kind of a Julius you want, set your alarm clock, and he'll ring just when, where, and how you want him.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

What do you think, Laura?

LANGHORN.

[*Twinkles over to her.*] Say the right thing, Laura! [*Twinkles back to* MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.] She says, "Of course!" Don't you, Laura?

LAURA.

[*With a smile.*] I think he's too young, mother, to be left alone.

LANGHORN.

Capital! I'm the youngest thing you ever heard of—and getting younger all the time.

[*Takes* MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE'S *arm, and leaves with her.*]

HOBART.

And now, shall we follow them?

LAURA.

It's a wonderful feeling, going to Monte Carlo for the first time. And to think that we are ending it there! It's like playing with fire—isn't it? Well [*with a sigh of satisfaction*], it's a comfort to know that I shall be sheltered. [*Nestles closely to him.*]

[ROSE HAMLIN'S *laugh is heard off.*]

LAURA.

[*Releasing herself from* HOBART—*with agitation.*] I know that laugh.

HOBART.

[*With concern.*] She is coming here—that Rosamond woman. If we go out at this side door we shall avoid her.

LAURA.

[*With quick determination.*] I don't want to avoid her.

HOBART.

What do you want to do?

LAURA.

Speak with her.

HOBART.

What for?

LAURA.

Identify her. I know I can't be mistaken.

HOBART.

Even if you are not—what then?

LAURA.

Don't ask me that. There's something in my heart that's calling me to her.

HOBART.

[*Severely.*] I don't wish you to stay. I don't wish you to speak to her.

LAURA.

Don't say that, Walter.

HOBART.

[*As before.*] Understand me, Laura, I know you will not set my wishes at naught. Whoever this woman may prove to be, you and she can have nothing in common. Promise me that.

LAURA.

[*Waves her hand impatiently, too much absorbed in the approach of* ROSE.]

[HOBART *stands by the door waiting, as* ROSE HAMLIN, *with the outward semblance of an emblazoned demi-mondaine, a complete contrast to the girl of the first act, laughingly sweeps into the room from the other side.* FORD *stands in the doorway, through which she has just entered.*]

[LAURA *goes up to her, extending her hand.*]

LAURA.

Rose!

ROSE.

[*Stops consciously for a brief moment, then turns away, trying to assume a light indifference, with* FORD, *who comes down to her. She has shown in that one brief moment with* LAURA *all that she knows of self-control in avoiding a revelation.*]

LAURA.

[*Falteringly.*] You do not know me?

[HOBART *goes down shelteringly, and takes her up.*]

HOBART.

Thank Heaven, for that. [LAURA *buries her head on his shoulder. He goes out with her.*]

[*The music is heard off, at intervals, playing the incidental melody: "Silent Stars of Night."*]

FORD.

That was strange, wasn't it?

ROSE.

[*Assuming lightness.*] Strange? Not at all!

FORD.

She thought she knew you.

ROSE.

That happens to me all the time. There must be something very ordinary about me. I am constantly reminding people of their absent friends. [*Waiter brings on two glasses and a bottle of champagne in cooler, which he places on table.*]

FORD.

[*Going for the wine.*] Well, let's drink to the absent friends.

ROSE.

You have evidently exhausted your invention in finding motives for drinking.

FORD.

That is life. We are always finding motives for things

and people that require no motives at all. [*Handing her a glass.*] Is there a more bootless pursuit in life, than trying to find motives for people? The days and nights I have wasted on it!

ROSE.

Beginning with the motive of life, itself. [*She sighs.*]

FORD.

Thank God, I've gotten beyond that point. Life has no motive. [*Looking closely at her.*] There's a tear drop clinging to the fringe of your eyelash. There's no motive for that. And I know it. I'm going to brush it off. [*Does so.*] That girl's fancied recognition of you has awakened memories—these memories have caused a tear. One more motiveless than the other. We know *she* had no motive, for she was a stranger to you—and I'll be hanged if I let you imagine one: for I don't like tears. And there's only one way to extract happiness out of this wretched life of ours—dismiss what you don't like—banish it—forget it. [*All this has been spoken with a sort of introspective bitterness.*]

ROSE.

If you can.

FORD.

Why not? I've learned the trick! It has cost me something to learn it. But I have learned it!

ROSE.

That's where we deceive ourselves—that's where we become addicted to those new beliefs, which, whether they be disguisd as medicine or religion, are only another form of narcotic. They still the pain—they cannot cure it. And

memory—the greatest pain of all, can only sleep—it can never die.

FORD.

Well, who cares whether it sleeps or dies, so long as it doesn't wake up?

ROSE.

[*In a lighter tone.*] At any rate, we did not come here to exchange morbid fancies, did we?

FORD.

No—I'll be hanged, if we did. Though, if you were to ask me what we did come for, I couldn't tell you.

ROSE.

That is not very flattering—especially as it was your suggestion that we should find this place the most secluded.

FORD.

Quite right. So it is. And if there is one thing a checkered life has taught me, it is the blessing of seclusion. [*Drinks.*] Especially seclusion for two. [*Fills her glass and offers it to her. She declines.*] No? I'm sorry. I wanted you to meet me on equal grounds.

ROSE.

I don't like to see you drinking so much. It may sound too frank, but I should like you better if you didn't.

FORD.

Perhaps you wouldn't like me at all, how do you know? I'm an unbearable prig when I'm too sober. And, besides, if I were *too* sober, would I now be enjoying the honor of your charming society?

ROSE.

[*Rising and moving away.*] I don't think I understand.

FORD.

[*Feeling the wine.*] Pardon me. I didn't mean that. There's one thing I want you to take for granted in my society. I *mean* to be a gentleman. My methods may, at times, appear obscure; but I shall always *mean* to be a gentleman.

ROSE.

[*With a touch of bitterness.*] And, after all, what are mere manners?

FORD.

Yes. [*Then grasping her meaning.*] What do you mean?

ROSE.

Underneath any possible show of gallantry on your part, I should read the truth. I should always know.

FORD.

What?

ROSE.

That you had first met me in that informal way.

FORD.

It was a very delightful way.

ROSE.

That may be true—but it carries its punishment. I wonder if we should like each other as well, if we had been properly introduced?

FORD.

I can only speak for myself. I shouldn't like you half so well.

ROSE.

I can't understand that.

FORD.

Oh, you could, if you knew the kind of a derelict I am. I have long since stopped being properly introduced. I am just a drifting hulk, for the casual wayfarer to make the best or the worst of.

ROSE.

I can't make you out. You choose your words too well to be sincere. I have found that those who feel deepest sometimes fumble.

FORD.

Well. [*Bluntly.*] I *don't* feel deeply. I don't want to —and I hope I may never fumble.

ROSE.

Do you remember how we first met?

FORD.

I think so. It was at the Casino concert.

ROSE.

The concert was over. You lingered in your seat. They were putting out the lights. They had just played Beethoven. There was something in the music that enthralled you.

FORD.

[*With momentary rapture.*] It was Beethoven, that was all!

ROSE.

I, too, was enthralled. I saw you when you came in, and I watched you. I didn't know what it was that attracted me to you—I don't know *now*. I watched you, too, as you

sat alone—and I heard you mutter to yourself, disquieted, as in a troubled dream. Then I leaned over to you and spoke to you. You did not seem surprised.

FORD.

[*In a matter-of-fact tone.*] No.

ROSE.

And why were you not surprised?

FORD.

[*With a slight, unpleasant laugh.*] Ha! I presumed I wasn't the first man you had spoken to.

ROSE.

[*Flushing.*] But you were—in just that way—you were.

FORD.

And why did you?

ROSE.

Because I felt at that moment that there was a sadness in your life that claimed kinship with mine. And you did not seem displeased to have me speak.

FORD.

Not at all displeased. I had seen *you* come in, too. And I liked your air. I liked the way you took possession. And I had made up my mind to become acquainted with you.

ROSE.

How did you expect to manage it?

FORD.

Would it have been so difficult?

ROSE.

Very. I, too, have long ceased adding to my acquaintances.

FORD.

Then if you hadn't chosen——

ROSE.

If I hadn't chosen to speak to you as I did, in the strange impulse of the moment—we might never have met.

FORD.

That is hard to believe. Aren't you a woman of the world? Don't we know a number of people in common?

ROSE.

That may be. I am a woman of the—[*hesitates*]—world; if you choose to put it that way—known to perhaps too many—but there is one right I have never waived—a right which I guard more sacredly as the days go by. The right to *deny* myself. You may not value it too highly—this privilege of being one of my friends, but it may give me an added value in your eyes to know that you are one of the few.

FORD.

Oh, don't think I undervalue the fact. If I don't express my satisfaction too glibly, remember that I have the right to choose my own time to fumble. But I know your reputation! Hobart has taken pains enough to educate me on that score!

ROSE.

[*With a touch of anger.*] Hobart!

FORD.

Yes—my friend—one of my few friends.

ROSE.

[*As before.*] And what does Hobart know of me?

FORD.

What does Hobart know of anybody—not much—only everything! Hobart stands for the greatest newspaper in the world, that recognizes only one crime—and that is, "not to know."

ROSE.

And he has been enlightening you about me?

FORD.

[*With extravagant grandeur of expression.*] Illuminating!

ROSE.

He has belittled my reputation?

FORD.

[*As before.*] Belittled it! Exalted it! He has painted you in such colors that crowned heads should now be envying me the privilege of this tête-à-tête.

ROSE.

[*Darting up in pride.*] You mean this for mockery—but they should, indeed! They should!

FORD.

[*Continuing.*] Why, you have turned a cold shoulder—a beautiful cold shoulder upon even the king of—— But why betray the old dotard? He has done sillier things than lose his heart to the beautiful Rosamond.

ROSE.

[*As before.*] There are others on the list of dotards,

more radiant than that old fool; you can tell that to your friend.

FORD.

Well, in that case, how can I—I—I—you see, I am fumbling at last.

ROSE.

I have chosen you, because—I have acquired a reputation for being select.

FORD.

[*A little harshly.*] Now it is you who are mocking. But, by Heaven, I doff my hat to no man when it comes to being worthy of a woman's favor! You owe it to me—you and all your beautiful sisters—to help wipe out the misery one of you has caused.

ROSE.

[*With sudden interest.*] What misery is that?

FORD.

[*Bitterly.*] Do you think I shall live it over again to please your idle fancy? Ah, no! That would be too high a price to pay even you!

ROSE.

[*With pained resentment.*] It's the wine that is speaking!

FORD.

What if it is the wine? Let's be thankful for it! It is unmasking our souls—it is helping us to reach each other aright. Well [*with an assumed swagger*], beautiful Rosamond, you have conquered me! Crowned heads can go hang, and so can Hobart, with his fine phrases of sur-

rendered manhood! I love you, beautiful Rosamond, just as ardently and deeply as any man can lie about! And, by Heaven, I will pay your price!

ROSE.

[*Tries to speak. Her voice fails her. She bursts into tears, and sinks sobbing upon the seat.*]

FORD.

[*Suddenly realizing his position, makes a desperate effort to pull himself together.*] My God! What a miserable coward I am! [*Goes to her.*] Don't cry! I am not worth your tears! I ask your pardon. [*He kneels to her —she weeps silently.*] I don't know how to deal with women, they are all so different. You see, my fatal fluency plunged me into such a torrent of words, I didn't know what I was saying. I can't blame Hobart for *everything* —but I can blame him for a good deal. But I am a fool— a miserable, wretched fool. [*All this has been said with honest simplicity, and he breaks down utterly at the close.*]

ROSE.

[*Recovering, lays her hand upon his head.*] You are only a boy. A wayward, unhappy boy. You didn't know —you didn't know!

FORD.

No. I couldn't have known. [*He has risen.*]

ROSE.

It is your youth, and the ignorance of youth that has fascinated me. For, with all the worldly wisdom that you assume, your heart is as guileless as a child's. What right have I, with my bitter knowledge, to expect you to understand?

FORD.

What bitter knowledge can you have that I have not?

ROSE.

I am a woman—and to a woman, knowledge is bitterness in itself—to a man it is only progress. I am going to leave you. But I want to make a confession to you before I go. Will you hear it?

FORD.

Why should you go? You have forgiven me?

ROSE.

Yes, but will you hear my confession?

FORD.

Yes. [*Slight pause.*]

ROSE.

I meant it all, when I said I had chosen you out of many, and I had come to-day to tell you so.

FORD.

Rosamond!

ROSE.

I know your friend Hobart has told you the kind of woman I am—Rosamond, with her villa by the sea, and her splendid sins. He may be right or he may be wrong. What does he know, save from common report? But the same right I hold to deny has given me the right to bestow. I am a free agent. No living soul has any claim on me. You speak of my reputation. What do I care for that? I forfeited that long ago, and I did it with my eyes open—because I dared to do it. And because I defied those who valued it so highly that they demanded my

degradation. Let them answer if they have been satisfied. Beyond this, my life does not concern you. But there is that in yours that has made its silent appeal—an unspoken charm of sorrow that has drawn you to me. Yes—even now it is whispering insidiously into my ear "surrender." I should have fought against this with heart and brain a year ago, but now—what have I to lose?

"To say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue, we can miss it,
Of sin—we can but kiss it,
And it's no longer sin."

[*As he embraces her, she frees herself.*] And so—good bye! [*Extends her hand.*]

FORD.

[*Taken aback.*] Surely you are not going to say good bye?

ROSE.

Yes.

FORD.

Not until you tell me when and where we shall meet again.

ROSE.

Why should we meet?

FORD.

Have all your words meant nothing? Have you been kindling a fire in my soul, only to laugh at it?

ROSE.

Have I kindled a fire there? What is this fire?

FORD.

What matters the name I give it? If it be not love, it is a strange, mad longing, that calls out to you—I want you, Rosamond.

ROSE.

As a plaything! As others have wanted me!

FORD.

Can we afford to laugh at the passion the gods have planted in our breasts? You have bewitched me—you have bewildered me. I have had my full share of misery, let me forget it in your arms.

ROSE.

But your friend has warned you—I am a dangerous woman!

FORD.

I *want* you for the dangers I may brave!

ROSE.

[*Feverishly extracting a letter from the folds of her dress.*] Read this—read this—[*gives it to him*] it is from the Baron de Graff.

FORD.

Your lover!

ROSE.

[*With supreme contempt.*] My lover! Read it! Read it!

FORD.

[*Reading silently.*]

ROSE.

[*Speaks while he reads.*] For months he has importuned me. He has even compromised me. His name has been

linked with mine, and no doubt a hundred times by your all-wise friend; but read—read.

FORD.

[*Having read, with excitement.*] Why, he offers you a king's ransom, and implores——

ROSE.

[*Cutting him short.*] No, he does not *implore*—he *demands.*

FORD.

And what answer have you sent him?

ROSE.

[*Tearing the letter into bits, as if the act were one of banishment, speaks with supreme scorn.*] He left for Austria this morning, with insults and curses upon his lips, and I am proud and happy in this hour—whatever comes with years. Shall I tell you why? Because—branded, though I am—I can indulge myself in the luxury of my own choice. Do you understand? But I have my price! [*In a tone of great elation.*] I have my price!

FORD.

Rosamond! What do you mean?

ROSE.

I will tell you to-night—in my arms—and you will pay it. Say that you love me! I know it will be a lie, but the recording angel will blot it out, for it will be a glint of happiness in a life that has been all delusion! Say it—say it!

FORD.

Rosamond—I—I—— [*She chokes off the word.*]

ROSE.

No—no, it would be a sacrilege—but you do prize the gift I am throwing at your feet?

FORD.

[*Embracing her.*] Rosamond!

ROSE.

This is my hour of madness—but it is the madness of joy. Listen—my villa nestles at the foot of the hill. But a short distance from the Hotel de Paris at Monte Carlo, as you turn towards the sea. It is overgrown with jasmine and roses. You will find it. Come to me there—to-night! We shall be all alone—you and I—and the silent stars. You will come?

[*As he moves to embrace her she leaves him, his face illumined with wonder and transport.*]

[The curtain falls.]

End of Act II.

ACT III.

SCENE: "ROSAMOND'S *Bower.*" [*A richly furnished interior, with windows at the back that open upon a balcony overlooking the starlit Mediterranean Sea, with its deep, wonderful blue. Through the open windows stringed music floats from the waters, the melody a reminiscence of the previous act.** *A bedroom adjoins the boudoir, where the invisible* ROSAMOND, *supposedly disrobing, is heard to speak, from time to time, during the opening conversation.*]

FORD *is DISCOVERED upon the balcony, first looking out towards sky and sea, then turning towards the inner room. He draws a deep sigh of mingled pain and pleasure, and then murmurs, with deep feeling.*

It is so beautiful, it almost *hurts.*

ROSE.

[*From the adjoining room—in a tender voice.*] Are you talking to yourself or me?

FORD.

What does it matter? Speech means so little. The poetry of it all loses in the utterance. Why don't you come?

ROSE.

[*As before.*] I am trying to manage without my maid, as you know, and that has its difficulties.

* The incidental melody "Silent Stars of Night" can be obtained of the publisher, Chas. K. Harris, New York.

FORD.

No doubt.

ROSE.

Have you ever read that fairy tale of Grimm's, in which the maiden Rapunzel is besought to let down her hair?

FORD.

[*Quoting it sentimentally.*] "Rapunzel! Rapunzel! Let down your hair!"

ROSE.

Yes, but letting down her hair must have been a simpler process in those days. With the intricacies of modern hair dressing, I can't imagine Rapunzel obeying that behest without some consideration. [*Sighs.*] "Rapunzel! Rapunzel! Let down your hair." It haunts me. How did she ever do it without her maid?

FORD.

History doesn't say whether she had a maid or not. [*He comes down.*]

ROSE.

Oh, surely! In her little romance there couldn't have been a third, any more than in ours. Poetry demands its sacrifices, you know. But it is hard to be self-reliant in such a moment as this. I shall have to choose my own gown—think of having to make that mental effort all alone. Could I be showing you a greater mark of distinction? What is your favorite color?

FORD.

I have none. I love all colors. Just color for color's sake. [*He sits.*]

ROSE.

My poet lover is complacent to-night—but think how dreadful it would be if I took him at his word. I look hideous in some colors.

FORD.

I don't believe it.

ROSE.

And even if one poet has called us "a rag, and a bone, and a hank of hair," at heart, he's just as exacting about that particular rag as the rest of us. Are you getting tired of waiting? I shan't be long. Talk to yourself some more. I love to hear you.

FORD.

I don't think you would, if I were really talking to myself.

ROSE.

Why?

FORD.

Self-communing is not a very happy pursuit with me. If I were really alone, even this wondrous beauty would have its bitterness.

ROSE.

That is no mood in which to greet the little god who has drawn us together.

FORD.

Who shall say the little god has done it?

ROSE.

Who shall say he has *not?*

FORD.

[*Rising.*] How all the glories of the night would be-

come intensified if that were so. If I were really your lover, if that mysterious *you*—with all your potent charm—were, let us say, that lover's bride—what a different rapture would swell our breasts! How all the magic of this scene, which even now, though we know we are but trifling with the sacred fire, stirs us to a semblance of joy—how it would then uplift and exalt us! There would be no room for bitterness and gall. But that is the curse and cost of worldliness—it shows us the tinsel of fairyland—and makes a pastime of our passions. [*He moves towards the balcony again.*]

ROSE.

Do you think that your worldliness and mine are just the same?

FORD.

They may differ in degree, but not in kind. We buy illusions, and call them pleasures. [*On the balcony.*]

ROSE.

Are you sure they are illusions and nothing more?

FORD.

As sure as I am that this wonderful spot, Monte Carlo, is known to the world, not for its beauty, but for its wicked pleasures. But some day I shall write a book. It will deal with this place, and the soul-entrancing drive that brings us here along the Corniche Road. And though famous places, like famous people, are best known by their sins, there shall not be a word in it about the Casino, or the gaming tables—just about its marvelous self, reveling in the beauty God has robed it in. [*He drinks in the scene.*]

ROSE.

Will it be in prose?

FORD.

I shall have to write it in prose, but it will be felt in poetry [*with a smile*], which may prevent its ever being written at all [*returning to the room*], for even the pen can fumble, you know. [*He has returned into the room and meets* ROSE.]

ROSE.

[*ENTERING, in silken dishabille, her hair loosely caught in a coil, her neck bare, a picture of sweetness, grace, and self-surrender.*] And what do you call poetry?

FORD.

[*Entranced by the sight of her.*] You! [*He attempts to embrace her.*]

ROSE.

[*Gently disengaging herself as she rests upon his shoulder.*]

FORD.

How am I going to resist all this loveliness?

ROSE.

I don't want you to resist it. But this is to be a lover's journey through wonderland. We do not want to rush to the end of it [*very softly*], but linger on the way, lest we should miss a single stage of its happiness.

FORD.

[*With boyish resignation.*] And how shall we begin this journey?

ROSE.

Here, like this. You shall sit at my feet, and look up

into my eyes while you speak. [*She places a stool for him, and sits on a cushioned seat above him.*]

FORD.

[*Seated as directed.*] Speak! While I am silenced with your beauty! [*He gathers her two hands and kisses their palms.*] I can't speak.

ROSE.

That doesn't sound a bit worldly. You who have taken such an accurate measure of your own feelings shouldn't try to mislead mine. After all, I think my estimate of you is the true one. Was I not right when I said you were a boy? My sweet, wayward, darling boy.

FORD.

Well, if to be overcome by your charm and grace is to be a boy, I am a boy. But an eager and impatient one. [*He lays his head on her lap and clasps her knees.*] It seems long ago that my boyish spirit forsook me. But it returns to me to-night. I am almost happy.

ROSE.

Happy in a delusion?

FORD.

Yes.

ROSE.

For that is what I am, you know.

FORD.

[*With a sigh.*] I know—and I am clasping you for the happiness it brings.

ROSE.

But does it bring happiness? Isn't that the bitterest part

of it? As I hold you close, like this [*she caresses him*], if I were not a little schooled in that worldly knowledge you profess—I might be deceived. If I didn't *know*, I might *think* it love.

FORD.

No one would chide you for it.

ROSE.

But the little god would be laughing at me. And I might be deceiving you with the belief that I loved you in return. And we should begin our journey with deceit; that, somehow, would rob it of its charm.

FORD.

Isn't that part of the game we are playing?

ROSE.

[*A little sadly.*] True. True. I must not forget that it is only a game.

FORD.

How could *you* forget?

ROSE.

[*Pained.*] To be sure. How could I forget? What writer is it that speaks of the trick of the senses? For a brief moment *mine* had tricked *me*. And as I caught your frank and boyish look I was almost deceived. You *couldn't* think that I loved you? Could you?

FORD.

I don't know what I think.

ROSE.

Or that *you* love *me?*

FORD.

What difference does it make? I am happy to-night—happy for the first time in many months. I don't ask what it is that makes me so. Whatever it is, you have brought it to me. It is the touch of *you*. It is the strange light in your eyes—it is the fragrance of your breath. God only knows what it is—but it is *you*. And I wish to hold it fast. [*Clasps her fervently.*]

ROSE.

[*In a tone of elation, in his arms.*] And to think that every word you utter might be translated into love—*if we did not know*—— [*Calming herself.*] You were angry with me to-day for asking why you were unhappy. Are you still angry with me for wanting to know?

FORD.

Years have passed since this afternoon. Something seems to give you the right to ask now. But why should you want to know? I have forgotten sorrow. Is it not enough for you to feel that you have banished it?

ROSE.

Some woman made you unhappy. That I know. But I am a woman, and I must plead my sister's cause. What had you done?

FORD.

[*Rising, and finding a tone of bitterness.*] What had I done? That is the mockery and the misery of it! If I could only answer that question, then, perhaps, I should find a surcease of that sorrow that has made me play the fool—the fool who even now is frittering away his life. But because I cannot answer it, I am doomed to self-tor-

ture. What had I done, indeed! Do you think it was through any fault of mine?

ROSE.

[*In equal agitation.*] It was through no fault of yours?

FORD.

No! But how can you understand! How can *you* understand! [*In mental distress, he throws himself upon the cushioned seat.*]

ROSE.

[*After a pause, during which she shows what effect his words have made upon her, goes over to him, clasps his head and kisses his forehead, as she speaks with much feeling.*] Oh, yes, I can understand—my poor, poor boy! [*A gradual change comes over him, as his momentary anger yields to her physical charm.*]

FORD.

Don't! Don't!

ROSE.

What?

FORD.

Don't kiss my forehead. That's in pity. I don't want pity!

ROSE.

They say that pity is akin to——

FORD.

I know what it is akin to. But I don't want that kind of love. I am not *really* a boy. It is part of the comedy you are playing to call me one. It has been my part to *play* the boy. It's easy enough! The first dawn of a new

passion puts the boy into all our hearts. I know that, because I am a man!

ROSE.

[*Bending over him, brings him under the influence of her charm. His head upon her breast, she murmurs soothingly.*] I know! I know!

FORD.

[*With intensity, in a hoarse voice.*] If I am to kiss you —let me kiss your lips.

ROSE.

Why, they are here for you to kiss. But not yet—not yet. There is so much I want you to know before our lips meet.

FORD.

What more do I want to know—than that you are you?

ROSE.

[*Close to him, their faces almost touching.*] But who and what am I?

FORD.

My queen!

ROSE.

For to-night. But there is a morrow.

FORD.

Let to-morrow wait. You are my queen to-night. [*Clasps her in his arms passionately.*]

ROSE.

[*Still denying him her lips.*] Sweetheart—listen—just for a moment. You think it is easy for me to surrender —well—perhaps it is. But until you know what I have to tell, you will not be able to understand why I hesitate.

FORD.

[*With returning bitterness.*] You have not repented of your bargain? You do not wish me to leave you?

ROSE.

[*With a touch of pain.*] Do not call it a bargain. See [*clasping him to her heart*], does this look as though I wanted you to leave? But by the love you once bore—no—not *her*—for she was false—but by the most sacred love you ever knew—I conjure you, do not call this meeting of ours by that name. It *was* a bargain, I know—and I am here to carry out my share of it. But in the name of all the beauty and mystery of love, let us not think of it in that way. If we can cheat ourselves into a feeling that is so *nearly* love, let us still further cheat ourselves into giving it a holier name.

FORD.

But why should we cheat ourselves at all? You and I belong to the same world. We drink of the same delights. We triumph in the same possession. Will our transports be lessened by candor? If one word doesn't suit, we can choose another. What are *words;* we both know the *truth* —and it is the truth that has drawn us together!

ROSE.

[*Terrified, eludes him.*] No—no—you do *not* know the *truth.*

FORD.

Then you deny me the right to hold and kiss you?

ROSE.

No—no, I deny you nothing. God knows if there were

a thousand rights, I should give them to you *all,* but you must listen—you must be calm.

FORD.

Calm! That is the woman of it! Calm!

ROSE.

And who shall tell you that it is not I who have the greater task in being calm? The woman of it, indeed! What do you know of the fire in *her* soul? You must hear my story. It is not for my sake, but your own. When you have heard it—take me. I am yours—your plaything, your goddess, your highest, your lowest, your all in all! *Now* will you hear me?

FORD.

My God! What can you have to tell?

[*A pause.*]

ROSE.

It is no long history, but it must begin somewhere. When I left my mother's house a year ago, I was to have been married to a man I loved, loved as deeply as you must have loved her whom you did not marry. This man—learning that I was [*she bows her head and lowers her voice*] an illegitimate child, brought me the news, and cast me off. Through no fault of mine he cast me off.

FORD.

The cur!

ROSE.

Do you see how our lives run parallel? My sorrow and remorse gave way to bitter hatred. If the world had really cast me out I would give it cause. I came to Paris, de-

termined to be avenged—but on whom? In the blindness of my wrath I didn't see that I alone should be the victim. I was surrounded by men of rank and wealth. I learned soon enough the grim lesson of the half-world, that men hunger for what they can't obtain, and indifference is the only gift that pays. The last shred of respectability seemed torn from me, and I took comfort in the thought that one at home would have it on his conscience, when some day he should hear of my downward path! My downward path! Ha! where was it leading me to? I left Paris and came here. A dozen, fifty, a hundred times. I had been on the point of yielding *all*—that absolutely last of all! But no! Something within me rebelled! I could blind the whole world—I could not blind myself! I was degraded in the eyes of men and women who did not know —but never—as God is my judge—never could *I* who *did* know—degrade myself to *that.* [*With a shudder.*] No! Not to *that!* Some hidden hand reached out—some buried voice awoke, some conscience, some soul, some nameless, inborn spirit held me back! And that spark, which only burns in the breast of a good, pure woman, has never been extinguished in mine!

FORD.

[*Amazed.*] What do you mean?

ROSE.

Tarnished, declassed, shamed for seeking shame, if you will, but the woman you have chosen for your queen to-night could not look into your eyes more fearlessly, more unfalteringly, if you had chosen her for your bride.

[*A deep pause.*]

FORD.

[*Awed.*] Then who and what am I that I should be here, and by what miracle have you been led to me?

ROSE.

You are my chosen lover. It is the soul's hunger that has led me to you. The girl I was a year ago could have gone with her lover to the altar of the church and become his wife. There is no altar for such as I—save that which we build for ourselves with our passionate hearts. To this altar I have come. It is the vanquished woman, at last, who speaks. [*She bows her head.*]

FORD.

[*Goes to her, with deep feeling.*] Rosamond!

ROSE.

Dearest! [*She sinks into his arms. He kisses her eyes, and with deep tenderness strokes her hair. The distant music rises and falls.*]

[*A pause.*]

ROSE.

I feel as though I had come to the end of a long journey. Weary of body, but with soul elate. Oh, the sweet rest of it! [*Comforting herself in his arms.*] And oh! The glad joy! Kiss me, kiss my lips!

FORD.

No. Not your lips. [*Kisses her face and her hair, and then her hands, which he holds.*]

ROSE.

And why not my lips?

FORD.

I dare not.

ROSE.

Dare not, in this hour of your triumph! Am I not yours of all men in the world—yours alone?

FORD.

No, darling.

ROSE.

You do not believe me, then?

FORD.

It is because I believe that I dare not.

ROSE.

I do not understand.

FORD.

But you shall.

ROSE.

[*Continuing.*] I only know that Fate has guarded me for this hour, to lay me, a willing sacrifice, upon your heart. Do not speak, but kiss me.

FORD.

But will you not hear me before it is too late?

ROSE.

It *is* too late. The last bridge has been crossed, we are on the shores of Paradise.

FORD.

Rosamond, we must part.

ROSE.

[*Startled.*] Part? [*In a fever of self-questioning.*] Because I have bared my soul to you? Because I am not the wanton you believed me when you bargained for me?

FORD.

Do not use that word.

ROSE.

[*Intensely.*] I must. It was *your* word—and there is no other. Am I less fair to-night than I was at noon? You bargained for me *then*. You bade me name my price, so that you might pay it. [*With a burst of elation.*] There is *no* price—only kiss for kiss!

FORD.

There is a far greater—too great for me to pay! [*A short pause of wonder.*] Ah, Rosamond, hear me! [*He goes close to her; she places her hand over his lips.*]

ROSE.

No! No!

FORD.

[*Removing her hand.*] It would be easy enough for me to yield. Every pulse in my veins is pleading your cause. But there is a spark in every honest *man's* breast that he dare not let die. I have never laid violent hands upon a sacred shrine. I can't, Rosamond, I cannot! Do you think that a woman's purity counts for so little in my eyes that I can wantonly lay it waste? A man may be of coarser fibre, but deep in his nature there is something akin to the holiest in yours. Something that God gave to his mother, and his mother gave to him!

ROSE.

[*Having listened, deeply impressed, now stands lost in awed silence.*]

FORD.

[*Continues passionately.*] You will understand it all more clearly some day—and you will place to my credit the outcome of this night—and what the parting means to me in self-denial. But I am only human, and I must go! [*Resists the inviting passion of her lips.*] Good bye! [*He dashes out. A pause. The front door is heard closing.*]

ROSE.

[*Voiceless up to now, in a conflict of emotion, cries out in a tone of intense longing.*] Come back! [*and sinking upon the seat, sobs in a voice of infinite feeling.*] I love you! I love you!

[*The music is heard in the distance as the curtain falls.*]

[End of Act III.]

ACT IV.

SCENE: WALTER HOBART'S *sitting room in the hotel at Monte Carlo. It is about nine in the morning. The room bears evidence of an all-night session. The blinds are still down and the electric lights ablaze.*

HOBART *is completing his morning toilet at a mirror, while* FORD, *pale and distracted, is seated at a little table, on which liquors and siphons are in evidence. He is dressed as in the previous act.*

HOBART.

I think, Ford, I have gathered all the material facts. I certainly ought have by this time. Do you realize how long this session of ours has lasted? [*Looks at clock.*] Nine o'clock! I think four hours ought to be enough for even the densest mind to comprehend the situation. Let us let the light of day in on it. [*Pulls up blinds and extinguishes lights.*]

FORD.

But how do I know that you have comprehended it? Not by any word you have spoken. You have expressed surprise, that was all.

HOBART.

The human brain is not capable of two sets of emotions at one and the same time. When you routed me out of

bed at five o'clock this morning, and bade me not to say a word, but just listen, I obeyed. For four hours I have listened. I have not exhausted the one set of emotions. What may follow my surprise I am not prepared to say. There's one thing, however, I shall have to do, as a direct result of your confidence, which I rather resent. [*Goes to escritoire at back.*]

FORD.

What is that?

HOBART.

Destroy about a dozen pages of the most interesting material contained in my article on the Riviera. [*He finds the pages, and tears them into bits.*]

FORD.

[*Impressed by this, rises.*] Hobart, there's something fine about you—damned if there isn't.

HOBART.

Very likely. But this doesn't prove it. My boss, the yachtsman, makes us verify things before we print them —and in the light of recent developments I wouldn't care to stand the yachtsman's test. So much for my professional attitude in the matter. Now for my personal. I take it that the last thing you are looking for in your present frame of mind is advice.

FORD.

I won't say that. Why have I told you all this?

HOBART.

There's a blessing in the gift of speech, just for the relief it gives the speaker. But you do not want advice—

you would not be worthy of all that flood of feeling if you listened to it. You will work out your destiny in your own way, and all you will expect of me is to slap you on the back and say, "Well done!"

FORD.

No matter *how* I shall work it out?

HOBART.

No matter how. But this much I do know. You will have to provide yourself with a clear outlook before you find your solution, and for that purpose you need sleep. You haven't slept, to my knowledge, for twenty-four hours. Go in there. Lie down. I will close the door. You shall not be disturbed for an hour, at least. You will be amazed what an effect an hour's sleep, taken at a crisis, will have on a man's life. [*Leading him to the bedroom.*] And while you are sleeping, you can transfer to me all the excess of mentality that is now disturbing you. That will give me the time I need to shift from one set of emotions to the other.

FORD.

[*Starts to speak, changes his mind—gratefully clasps* HOBART'S *hand, and allows himself to be led off into the adjoining room.*]

HOBART.

[*At the door.*] If I should be called away before you wake I'll leave any message for you on the alarm clock! [*He goes to his telephone and notifies the office that he wants a hallboy. He comes down to the table, takes pen and paper, and begins to write a letter, becoming absorbed.*

A knock at the door is unheeded; then repeated. After a pause the door opens, and LANGHORN *appears timidly.*]

LANGHORN.

I beg pardon.

HOBART.

[*Not looking up.*] Just a moment. I want you to take this note I am writing to Room 74.

LANGHORN.

Fancy that! I have just come from there.

HOBART.

Eh! [*Looking up.*] Why, hello, Langhorn! I was expecting the hallboy.

LANGHORN.

I gathered that you were expecting *somebody*. You said something about Room 74.

HOBART.

I am sending this note to Miss Laura.

LANGHORN.

She isn't there.

HOBART.

What do you mean?

LANGHORN.

There's some mystery. Some delightful little mystery. I love little mysteries, and it's always my good fortune to be in one of them. But I need help this time. I need help.

HOBART.

[*A little impatiently.*] You look it!

LANGHORN.

Fancy my receiving a summons at nine o'clock this morning, rousing me from my soft repose. [*Chuckling.*] Ho! Ho! I don't get soft repose every morning—not at Monte Carlo. No, indeed! But last night was one of my particularly solemn and virtuous nights—I went to bed at eleven!

HOBART.

Do come to the point, Langhorn. The messenger will be here in a minute. [*Knock at the door.*] There he is now.

LANGHORN.

Send him away. You won't need him. Miss Laura is not there, I tell you.

HOBART.

[*Puzzled, goes to the door, and dismisses unseen messenger in pantomime,* LANGHORN *talking during the action.*]

LANGHORN.

My summons was from Mrs. Winfield-Chase. She was alarmed. She had been awakened at an unusually early hour by Laura, who was dressing to go out. Mamma was too sleepy to ask a lot of questions, so she dozed off again, and when she was awakened for good, Laura was gone. Fancy—gone out at nine A. M. Nobody goes out at Monte Carlo at nine A. M.—that is—nobody that *I* know. So what does Mrs. Winfield-Chase do, but send for her Julius! There is one thing I will say for Miriam, when she is in doubt, she sends for Julius! She may affect to spurn him under ordinary circumstances, but give her a crisis—and her first impulse is to send for Julius. Do you know, I

like that! It makes me feel like a factor in her life! I love to feel like a factor! Now, what does Miriam say to me, when I answer her summons, but: "Find Laura!" Just as she might say: "Pass me the pickles!" "Find Laura!" And what could I say in response, on the instant, but: "Certainly, my dear." And she bade me go forth, and I have gone forth. Now, won't you please tell me where Laura is, so that I may find her?

HOBART.

Don't be absurd. [*Seriously.*] Do I understand you to say that Mrs. Chase really does not know where Laura is?

LANGHORN.

Well, 'pon my soul, what is the use of giving you all these eloquent details, if you can ask such a simple question as that? What am I here for? I am told to find Laura—and what more natural than——

HOBART.

Ask *me* to find her for you! Is that your idea of serving people in a crisis?

LANGHORN.

Can't you tell me where she is?

HOBART.

I haven't the slightest idea.

LANGHORN.

Why, she is your fiancée. You certainly are the first one she would go to.

HOBART.

I see you are working on a theory, at least. I didn't

give you credit even for that. But I am as much surprised as anybody that she should have left the hotel so early in the morning, though I refuse to be alarmed about it.

LANGHORN.

I am glad to hear you say that. That's what I said to Miriam. "Don't be alarmed! Don't be alarmed!" But it didn't have much effect. It's mysterious, you must admit —it's mysterious—and if it were not, as I said before, that I *do* like a little mystery——

HOBART.

Just where do you propose to look for her?

LANGHORN.

Where *do* I? If you fail me, I shall feel rather foolish. I don't quite know how to reason this thing out. I try to put myself in Laura's place. I ask, where would a young girl be likely to go to in Monte Carlo, so early in the morning, without her mother's knowledge—and, by Jove, I'm up a blind alley. I keep thinking of the silly story I read in one of the papers, of the man who offered a reward in the village to any one who would find his missing horse, and when a yokel did find him and return him to the owner, the owner asked how did he manage to do it, and the yokel said: "I thought out where *I* would be likely to go to, if *I* were a horse, and I went there and found him!"

HOBART.

[*Laughs.*]

LANGHORN.

But, somehow or other, that doesn't fit my case. I

can't for the life of me think where *I* would go to, if I were a horse—[*quickly correcting himself*] Miss Laura!

[*They laugh. A knock is heard upon the door. The laughter ceases.*]

HOBART.

Come in!

[*ENTER* LAURA.]

LANGHORN.

By Jove! Talk of the——

LAURA.

[*To* HOBART.] I want just a word—it is urgent.

LANGHORN.

I'm so glad you've shown up. I've been sent out to search for you.

LAURA.

Mother was too sleepy to understand my explanation.

LANGHORN.

Now that I have found you, I will report at once.

LAURA.

Please don't.

LANGHORN.

But she has been worrying dreadfully.

LAURA.

She won't have to worry much longer. I shall go to her directly.

LANGHORN.

But if I return without you?

LAURA.

Don't. Can't you *lose yourself* for ten minutes?

LANGHORN.

I might try. Monte Carlo is an excellent place to lose oneself in. I will give your mother a very elaborate account of my search. I may have to invent a marvelous line of travel—but it will have to end here—so if in ten minutes she should come in personal pursuit—don't be surprised. But you may depend upon me—I shall go on the wildest kind of a goose chase in search of you in the meanwhile. And with these few remarks, Julius will go forth with a sense of duty well performed. So-long! [*Waves his hand to both, and departs.*]

HOBART.

What has happened?

LAURA.

[*With some agitation.*] I received a letter early this morning.

HOBART.

From whom?

LAURA.

It was signed "Rose." But before I tell you about it, Walter, [*She presses her hand fervently*] you won't upbraid me! I was right, dear, yesterday, when I told you I recognized her. It threatened a breach between you and me—then—and I hardly know now how you will receive the news that I bring.

HOBART.

[*Quietly.*] You have just come from Rosamond's house.

LAURA.

[*In almost inaudible surprise, she nods her head.*] Yes.

HOBART.

[*Stroking her hair.*] Go on, my dear.

LAURA.

She told me her story—little by little. Oh, if you only knew the beginning.

HOBART.

I do know it.

LAURA.

[*Amazed.*] You do! What do you mean?

HOBART.

When you have finished——

LAURA.

What more shall I tell you? Walter, what is to become of her? She is going away. Where to? She couldn't, or wouldn't, tell. But, surely, there must be some one to advise. As that thought came to me, with it came the thought of the mother whom she needed, and I thought of *my* mother. What should I be without her? What if she would take *her* mother's place! Oh, if I could only bring this about! If you, Walter, could help me. And you will! For with all your cool, discerning brain, you are my true and gallant lover, with a warm, tender heart that you may conceal, but you can't disown! And I want your head and your heart both—for there is a life's happiness in the balance. [*She finishes, pleadingly, in his arms.*]

HOBART.

My brave little girl! How can I resist you! You have

captured my love and my logic in one raid. [*Caressing her.*] Now let's figure this thing out together. You seem to attach great importance to the meeting of Rosamond with your mother.

LAURA.

Surely.

HOBART.

Who shall agree, when doctors disagree? Not that I'm going to oppose that idea; on the contrary. But in all enterprises of life the greater absorbs the less. I am going to bring about an even more vital meeting. You and I shall assist destiny. How does that strike you?

LAURA.

It sounds wonderful!

HOBART.

I, too, had an early morning visitor. And I am in a better position to understand the true import of your story, from having heard both sides of it.

LAURA.

Why—Walter—what——

HOBART.

Sh-h-h. [*Silencing her with a little comic pantomime directed towards the bedroom.*] Don't let us wake the god out of the machine before his time. [*She expresses amazement.*] Listen. You are to bring the party in question to a meeting with your mother, at this hotel. Can you do it?

LAURA.

Why, she is waiting for a word from me over the phone.

HOBART.

Send her that word. [*As she starts.*] But wait a moment. You don't know yet how we are going to assist destiny. *These* are your mother's rooms—that is to say, they become so in this instance—for destiny's express purpose. Do you begin to grasp my idea? How many minutes is the distance to be traveled?

LAURA.

Not more than five.

HOBART.

Destiny is in luck! Now you can summon your party of the first part. Do so in the office downstairs [*with pantomime, as before*], for obvious reasons. Meet her below, and bring her up here. Then Destiny can take the case into her own hands and dismiss her understudies. You will join me in Room 74, where I shall be waiting for you [*with a twinkle*] with mother. And as a final postscript —should there be anything unforeseen to add to these arrangements, I will leave a note for you on this table. [*Indicates it.*]

[LAURA *kisses him, with much enthusiasm, and goes out.*]

HOBART.

[*Left alone for a moment, scratches his head in thought. Then he gets alarm clock, and brings it with him to table, sits and scribbles on a card which he attaches to the clock. As he starts for bedroom, knock is heard at door.*]

HOBART.

Come!

[*ENTER* MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.]
[HOBART *rises.*]

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Pardon me, Walter, but Mr. Langhorn said I should find Laura with you.

HOBART.

You must have passed her in the elevator. You will probably find her in your room by the time you return.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

From his account, he must have been looking for her in the most extraordinary places. I should have thought he would have come here first.

HOBART.

One would have thought so. When you return to your room, I should like the pleasure of accompanying you.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Oh, thank you so much. I do want to talk with you.

HOBART.

Oh, it's a very simple thing. But will you pardon me while I take this clock into the next room? It won't take a minute. Then I shall be entirely at your service. [*Goes off with the clock into the bedroom, and returns at once.*] Now I am ready.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

It's a singular coincidence, but do you recall, Walter, that yesterday Laura insisted on the resemblance of a certain person to a friend of ours in Washington?

HOBART.

Yes.

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

I have just received a letter from the mother of this very friend. It contains some remarkable information. Would you care to see it? [*Producing letter.*]

HOBART.

Thank you. [*She hands him the letter. He scans it.*] May I keep it for a while?

MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE.

Yes, if you like. I should like to talk it over with you.

HOBART.

Shall we go below? [*She nods. Going to the door, he opens it for her.*] I will join you in a second.

[*She goes through the door, he hurries back to the table, previously indicated, and lays the letter he has just received on it conspicuously; then follows* MRS. WINFIELD-CHASE *off.*]

[*A slight pause.*]

[*The alarm clock goes off in the adjoining room. Not too long. Then a pause.*]

[*Voice of* FORD, *as if talking to himself.*]

FORD.

It's God's own sunlight.

[*He is supposed to have awakened and found the note on the clock.*]

[*Another pause.*]

[*During this pause, music from the hotel orchestra is heard playing the melody of previous act.*]

[*After a reasonable space of time, voices of* LAURA *and* ROSAMOND *are heard outside hall door.*]

LAURA.

[*Outside.*] Here we are.

[*ENTER* LAURA, *followed by* ROSAMOND, *veiled.*]

LAURA.

Mother will join us in a minute. [*She immediately goes to table and finds letter. She scans it quickly, and decides at once what to do with it.*] [ROSAMOND *has removed her veil.*]

LAURA.

Here is something that may interest you. [*Hands letter to* ROSAMOND, *who is seated, and as the latter opens it, during which action a printed slip falls out on the floor,* LAURA *silently withdraws from the room.*]

[ROSAMOND *picks up the slip, and reads it with emotion. She reads the letter through, then wipes a tear from her eyes, and is lost in thought.*]

[*ENTER* FORD, *with* HOBART'S *card in his hand.*]

FORD.

Rosamond!

ROSE.

[*Surprised, rises quickly.*] You—you——

FORD.

[*In excitement.*] He told me the truth! He said you would come!

ROSE.

[*In bewilderment.*] What do you mean? Where is Mrs. Winfield-Chase?

FORD.

What do I know—and what do I care! I wake from a dream to find the dream come true.

ROSE.

But I am to meet Laura's mother here!

FORD.

Here, in Hobart's rooms?

ROSE.

These are Hobart's rooms?

FORD.

Yes. Didn't you know? He left me this note. I didn't quite grasp it when I read it. It speaks of assisting destiny by letting you believe you were going to meet Laura's mother. I understand it now! It was to give me the glorious chance of seeing you again!

ROSE.

He did this! He—Hobart—by what miracle?

FORD.

We had neither of us understood his nature. It has more than a practical side, begotten by his craft—he is full of a high purpose, like all who have loved and suffered—like us. Rosamond, I told him of what I had lived through since last night. And this is his answer. He has brought you to me.

ROSE.

And did you wish it?

FORD.

It is a prayer fulfilled.

ROSE.

[*In sweet amazement.*] *Your* prayer fulfilled?

FORD.

Mine.

ROSE.

But we did part—we parted—in farewell!

FORD.

No—not in farewell, for [*with deep feeling*] I love you.

ROSE.

[*Moved.*] You love me?

FORD.

I know it now. Through the hours of self-questioning that have passed since I held you in my arms, my heart has beaten but one response. I love you. I love you. [*He attempts to take her in his arms.*]

ROSE.

[*With a vague fear.*] Do you know that it is love?

FORD.

If it is not, why should I fear to lose you? And oh, Rosamond, if I should fail to kindle in your heart the true passion that is in mine——

ROSE.

[*With throbbing fervor.*] Fail! Did you not hear my soul's cry when you left me! It seemed as if the very winds of heaven must carry it to you. If it was not love that I offered you last night—in God's name, what was it, then?

FORD.

Then you are mine! Now and forever! To have and to hold till death us do part.

ROSE.

[*In real transport.*] Ah! If it only could be!

FORD.

It can be—it shall be—*and on any altar you may choose!*

ROSE.

[*Her face illumined.*] Oh, my own! I could not let you make the sacrifice!

FORD.

What sacrifice can *I* make, greater than you have made? Over the road of sorrow we have journeyed towards each other. There were two zealots, wandering through the thorns of separate paths, bruising, scourging, torturing their flesh. They meet—they gaze into each other's eyes —and they fall to healing each other's wounds.

[*A pause.*]

ROSE.

But when the fervor of our romance has died. In the harvest time of reason. In the days to come?

FORD.

The harvest time of reason is *now*. You, who in spite of heredity, temptation, environment, all those false beliefs that make for weakness and wrong—can bring as your dowry that strength of character that has kept you pure— you can have no fears for the days to come. And of *your* strength you shall give me a share.

ROSE.

Strength! Oh, my darling—see! [*She is weeping.*] This is all the strength I have. But these are tears of a great joy. And see, sweetheart—my new life is beginning with a happy omen. This letter came to-day—it is from my mother. My fa—her husband died many months ago. Read this printed slip, which the letter contained. [*She finds it, and hands it to him.*]

FORD.

[*Reads.*] "Married at Washington, on June 1st, the Count Laurento di Varesi, to Isabelle, widow of the late Richard Hamlin." [*He is impressed. He looks at her with deep feeling. She responds to his gaze with tranquil happiness, goes to him, lays her head on his breast. He kisses her as the curtain falls.*]

[End of the Play.]

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